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THE COMING COUNTRY

A PRE-VISION

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE GLEAM

WONDERS OF THE HIMALAYA

BUT IN OUR LIVES. A Romance of the
Indian Frontier

LIFE IN THE STARS

An Exposition of the View that on Some
Planets of Some Stars Exist Beings
Higher than Ourselves, and on one a
World-Leader, the Supreme Embodi-
ment of the Eternal Spirit which Ani-
mates the Whole

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THE COMING COUNTRY

A PRE-VISION

BY
Edward

1863-

SIR FRANCIS YOUNGHUSBAND

THE COMING COUNTRY

A PRE-VISION

BY

LONDON

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TO

MY MOTHER AND MY FATHER

WHO WERE AS DEVOTED TO THEIR CHILDREN AS THEY
WERE TO EACH OTHER

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

IN SOME RECOGNITION OF THE INCALCULABLE
DEBT I OWE THEM

THEIRS IT WAS TO SOW MINE BUT TO REAP

PREFACE

WRITERS may be divided into two classes—those who have nothing to say and say it extraordinarily well, and those who have something to say and say it extraordinarily ill. There may be a third class—those who have nothing to say and say it very badly. And my readers may conclude that I belong to this class. But I aspire to belonging to the second. I am now, at the end of my task, quite aware how inadequately I have described what I see in Ourownland. And at the last moment I feel half-inclined to withhold publication. I only refrain because I believe that one or two understanding and forgiving souls will be able to see that something superlatively good which I have failed to describe but which it is supremely necessary should be widely known. And my hope is that one of those choice few who can both see and describe will be provoked to make up for my deficiencies.

My theme is The Coming Country. My devotion to Ourownland—though I have not the honour of being a native of it—may have blinded me to her defects. And she may not really be entitled to be called the coming country. Some other may better deserve the distinction. But we may safely forecast that it will be that one which first sees the significance of the inner craving for spirituality—the country which first dares to put religion in the forefront of its activities, above politics, and above business, and first ventures to use its laity as well as its clergy, and its women as well as its men in the direction of its spiritual life; to put spiritual above intellectual education; and to

regard the home as above the school or the church in the upbringing of its children.

The coming country may be Russia, her soul purified and strengthened by her present awful sufferings. It may be Poland who already has the idea of a Messianic Mission. It may be Czecho-Slovakia whose Founder-President is enjoining upon his country "pure Christianity, the teaching of Jesus and His Law of life." It may be India, the very birthplace of great religions. It may be the Puritan-founded States of America—though they are now badly handicapped by their riches. Or, it may be England—if only she will find her soul.

Whichever country it may be, it will be scorned at the time. The better is always spurned by the good. And it will need a sublimer heroism and a steadier nerve than even war demands. But in the long centuries it will be hailed as the Saviour of the world and adored above all others.

F. E. Y.

June, 1928.

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INTRODUCTION

MANY years ago I was travelling across the Gobi Desert on my way from China to India. At the start there was the thrill at being out in the great free desert. No obstacle met the eye in any direction. All was wide open in front. I could just go on and on, and had all the joy of liberty.

I was travelling westward, too, starting each day's march about five in the afternoon. So every evening I would witness a glorious sunset. The sun would sink beneath the far horizon in a radiancy of colour. The whole sky would seem to be on fire and with ever changing hues. Then insensibly the colours would fade away. The last glow of fire would disappear. The whole sky would be of one hue only—a deep transparent sapphire. Out of this the stars would shine in undimmed brilliancy. And over all would be a stillness and a peace which rested most sweetly on my soul.

All this freedom, this solitude, this close companionship with Nature, this quiet from the stars, was an experience on which I have loved to dwell. But there were times, too, when the solitude and the dreariness of the desert hung heavy on me. I had no European with me. I was sometimes very lonely. I longed for companionship. And I longed for the sight of trees, and green fields and flowers.

One such day I remember. I had been travelling for nearly sixty days and still had not reached my destination. I was in the most desolate part of the whole desert. The heat was scorching. Under the

midday sun there was no glow of colour. All was bare, depressing brown. And I pined for invigorating breezes and verdant lands.

Then it was that I formed my resolution to have no more of deserts but to travel in Ouwounland. For there I was sure I should find all that my heart was thirsting after. It was my dreamland; and I resolved to go there as soon as my present journey was accomplished.

I had to spend some months in India on the completion of my journey. Then I was able to get away for three months. I had to travel about four thousand miles by sea and then for several hundred miles by land. But I did have time to catch just a glimpse of Ouwounland. It was wonderful. The greenness, the freshness, the tidy little fields. It was all one beautiful garden.

But this was only the outer aspect. And it was Ouwounland as it really is that I wanted to see. And I could not see that without intimate acquaintance with the country. So I returned there again and again whenever I could. But even then I found that I could not really see it unless I were equipped with better instruments of observation than those usually carried by travellers. So I set myself to perfecting an instrument which would enable me to see Ouwounland as she really is. And at last I have succeeded. I would not say that my instrument is perfect. It needs a lot of improvement yet. Still it is a great deal better than anything travellers usually take with them. And now that I have had time to make my observations with it I will proceed to set forth the results of my discoveries.

PART I
GESTATION

CHAPTER I

ENDSIGHT

JUST a moment, though, I must pause to describe the instrument itself, and how I came to invent it.

Ourownland had more than come up to my expectations. It was in every way a lovely country. Still, I had the feeling that I was not even yet seeing the real country. Ourownland had, I felt sure, hidden beauties which I still could not see. I could only dimly sense their presence. It was most tantalising. For it was of course the real inner country I wanted to see—not simply its outward aspect. That much could be seen by any paltry traveller. I prided myself on being a true explorer. And I would penetrate where no one else had ever been.

To accomplish this I soon found that I should have to be differently equipped from any previous traveller. When I had been exploring in the desert and in the Himalaya I had taken with me telescopes and field-glasses to aid my vision. In Ourownland I found that my eyesight must be intensified by quite different means. And unless it were so assisted I knew I should never see those inner treasures which some traveller's instinct within me made me sure were there.

What I had to do in short was to develop a new kind of sight.

This I eventually did. And some of my experience in travel gave me the first inkling as how to do it.

When serving on the Indian frontier among wild, impulsive, rather child-like people, I observed that

if an officer evidently disliked them, and distrusted them, and was suspicious of them, they would dislike *him*, and become unruly, and wayward, and be at their worst. But if an officer evidently *liked* them, and enjoyed living among them, they would be natural with him and be at their best—be more like what they really were. They might kick up their heels now and then, and be as naughty as they well could be. But they would come back shame-faced at the end of their spree. They would know they had earned censure and would not resent it when they got it from an officer they liked. And, in general, they would be as they really were—be themselves. And here again I noticed that the more the officer liked them the more they got to like him. And the more they liked him the more he liked them. And so the process went endlessly on, with the result that they would reveal themselves to him in their true nature, and he would get to know and understand them.

Now it was the observation of this process that gave me the clue to my great discovery. I pondered over it for years. And the idea gradually dawned upon me. If I sincerely liked a thing I could see right into it. See what it really was. And it would be the same with a person or a people. Love brings insight. Insight increases love. And the increased love brings deeper insight. This was the clue. It was very simple when I found it. But it took a long time finding, for I am very slow of perception in spiritual things. Perhaps others would have found it quicker if they had bent their minds to think about it.

With this clue as a guide I began to observe men. And, as I looked, I could see all their inner workings. It was a wonderful sight. I could see love and hate and jealousy and ambition and caution and daring

all swishing and swirling round, seething and boiling. But I could see, too, that there was generally one which was the dominant. There was generally a master-sentiment. Sometimes it was ambition, sometimes daring, sometimes love. And the rest, in spite of their ceaseless activity, would collect round this as a leader. It would dominate them all.

But I observed further that in all this bubbling activity there was a constant reaching upward. It was like a fountain. And it was like a fountain in which the water was not only pushed up from below but pulled up from above. And it was as if what was attracting it upward from above was actually what was compelling it from within. It was a very curious and interesting sight. And it puzzled me for a long time. Then the idea flashed upon me that if I was to see what was really driving men I must be able to see *high*—or see *deep*. And to see high or see deep seemed to be the same thing. For if I saw high enough I should see what was impelling them from within. And if I saw deep enough I should see what was attracting them from above. So, if I found out what they were aiming at, I should discover also what was urging them upward. I must look high, or deep, or both, and find their ultimate end.

But men are not much disposed to disclose their secret ambitions to anyone they do not like and who does not like them. So if I was to discover their ultimate end I must cultivate a liking in myself for them and in them for me. I must make myself likeable. This was the gist of the matter. And if I made myself likeable the people would get to like me more. And the more they liked me the more I should like them. And the more we liked one another the more chance I should have of seeing what their country was

like at bottom ; what was her inner actuating motive ; what end she was aiming at.

I knew I should never get to know Ourownland unless I liked her and was liked by her. And if I didn't really like the country I had better go to one that I did. Fortunately, I was naturally disposed to like Ourownland. And I deliberately cultivated this liking. I would not lightly harbour a single thought that would dispose me to *dislike* her. If it were a dull day, for instance, and the country looked gray and bleak, I would not allow this to incline me to dislike the country. I knew too well the dreary monotony of day after day of glaring, blazing sunshine in India to mind a few gray days in Ourownland. So I would bear the dull days with equanimity and look forward to those summer days which are the glory of Ourownland. I was determined to like her.

And I certainly did start with really liking her. I was no passing traveller as I had been in the Gobi Desert. I loved to live in Ourownland. And the more I saw of it the more I got to like it. The people were often brusque, and sometimes vulgar. But I was too fond of them in my heart to set too much store by a few blemishes. I meant to get on with them. I refused to be blinded by a few defects and deficiencies. I deliberately sought out their good points. I was delighted to find that as they saw that I liked them they came to like me. And as I persevered I found to my delight this new faculty gradually developing within me. And the more I exercised it the more efficient it became. And the more efficient it became the more clearly I could see into the heart of Ourownland.

This was how I came to acquire the new faculty and with it I could see the end towards which Our-

ownland was making and which was shaping the whole course of her development, just as the full blown rose regulates the development of the rose-bud. With our ordinary sight we can only see a chrysalis. With this marvellous new kind of sight I could see the butterfly in the chrysalis. With ordinary sight we can only see an egg. With this new sight I could see the song-thrush in the egg. With ordinary sight I could only see Ourownland as a photographer photographs it. With the new sight I could see what it would become—what the people even now were making it become.

This new faculty or instrument is insight: it penetrates right through the outward form and enables you to see the inner working of a thing. And it is also foresight, for it enables you to see far on ahead to the end towards which the thing is making and which governs the developing process of the thing throughout—the chrysalis, the rosebud, or the egg. It is both insight and foresight.

I call it, therefore, Endsight; and I would describe it as a kind of spiritual television.

CHAPTER II

OUROWNLAND

I HAVE been too long with my preliminaries. I had, though, to tell at some length how it was I was able to see all the wonders which I must now relate without more ado.

And the first wonder is about the climate. It was supposed to be the worst in the world. I found it to be the best. Travellers had been misled by the inhabitants themselves. They, if any, should know what their own climate is like. But they are extraordinarily ignorant as to what it really is.

And I must in fairness to other travellers say that I was myself long misled by the inhabitants. As geographers know, the country is often shrouded in mists, and has peculiar fogs of its own. On one of my many visits to the country I reached Towne, the capital, on a December day when the whole place was enveloped in a black fog. You could see only a few paces in front of you. All traffic was at a standstill. And your eyes began to smart with the blackness which penetrated everywhere. An Australian on his first visit to the country said that if this was what it was like he was going straight back to Australia.

This was, of course, an exceptional day. But the days of raw, cold, damp mist are many. And the uncertainty of the weather is another feature about which the inhabitants are perpetually complaining. They are inveterate grumblers. And if the day does happen to open fine they say that it will rain before it is over. The cultivators are the worst grumblers.

Nothing satisfies them. It is always the worst season they have known; if it is good for the wheat, it is bad for the root crops.

Naturally, therefore, when I heard the natives themselves continually abusing their climate—and not only abusing it but rushing off in thousands every year to find a better climate somewhere else—I was disposed to believe it really must be bad. And my own experience of it rather inclined me to agree with them at first. In India people could be quite certain when it was going to rain, when it was going to be fine, when it was going to be cold, when it was going to be hot. In Ourownland it would be sunny one day, rainy the next, sunny one half a day, rainy the other half. In the middle of summer you might have it quite cold. In the middle of winter would come a warm spell like summer. You could never tell where you were with the weather. And taking the whole year round there were certainly many more dull cloudy days than fine.

Yet when I began to exercise my newly discovered faculty of Endsight I found to my astonishment that the climate was not at all what it seemed. It was the exact opposite. To judge of it I looked at the effects it had produced. I noted the magnificent crops. Nowhere in the world had I tasted more delicious fruit. Certainly I had not eaten any better in India. The pears and the apples, the cherries and the plums, the strawberries and raspberries—no one could wish for anything better. The fruits seemed to mellow better in this variable but not extreme climate than anywhere else, and to have a sweeter taste. The flowers also seemed to smell sweeter from not having to rush to maturity as in the lands of powerful sunshine.

And the animals also show how good the climate is. The horses, the cattle, the sheep of Ourownland

are the best in the world. Pedigree stock are imported from Ouwownland by every other country. It is the finest breeding ground of animals of the best type there is.

And it breeds the finest men. Of this parent stock peoples have hived off to the farthest parts of the world, and created vigorous, prosperous new countries. From it still issues a succession of the most capable administrators, the most enterprising traders, the most adventurous explorers. Her sailors and soldiers are of the sturdiest stuff.

When I observed what hardy stock was produced and when I saw men hunting, shooting, fishing, or playing games in the open all the year round, winter or summer, and entirely for the enjoyment of the thing, I saw that the climate was not the worst but the best in the world. The natives were entirely mistaken about their own climate.

Equally misleading were they about themselves. Continually they were telling themselves that they were growing decadent, going to the dogs, not what they were. And outsiders took them at their word; they believed the people really were decadent. But I was among them when they were engaged in a four years' war of the utmost ferocity. They showed unsurpassed courage and endurance and came out victorious. Whether other peoples were equally brave, equally steadfast or not, certainly none surpassed them. When they were put to the test they emerged triumphant.

Yet no sooner was the war over than they renewed their bemoanings. Once more they are not what they were! Once more they are steadily going down hill! They are a curious people. But what is odder still is that outsiders should believe them—should take this

talk seriously. Why I don't is that I have now this power of Endsight. I can see through them. I can see the true stuff they are made of.

And what confirms me in my view is their action when there was what they call a General Stop. A stop is a general stoppage of all work—or rather of all hand-work. The hand-workers thought they were not paid enough so they agreed together all over the country that on a certain day they would stop working. They stopped work on that day. Not a hand's turn of work was done by them throughout the country. They thought their employers would be bound to give in. They thought the Government itself would have to give way. But no sooner was work stopped by the regular workers than young men—and young women, too—from offices, from banks, from universities, from every quarter sprang to the service of their country, and undertook work of every kind.

This was remarkable enough showing that the youth of Ourownland—and women as well as men—are of the same good stuff as of old. But what was more noteworthy still was the order and good temper shown by both sides. No people that was not of right good stamina—in spirit as well as in body—could have gone through the ordeal of the Stop in addition to the war as well as they did. In many another country there was revolution. Ourownland is still as firm as rock.

For all that, I must in honesty admit that in the world generally the people of Ourownland are regarded as an arrogant, grasping, selfish, self-centred people. Sometimes they are even accused of hypocrisy and self-righteousness—of posing before the world as being a great deal better than they really are. They can also show a hard and nasty side at

times, and be brusque and rude. In other countries they are by no means popular.

Coming from India where vulgarity is never seen I was struck too by a strain of vulgarity and coarseness which runs through them. Many of them are very common.

Altogether they are a formidable people for a timid man like I am to settle amongst. As forbidding at first sight as their climate. Still even to a stranger they show certain traits which give him encouragement. For they are a civil and a kindly people. They have not the polished politeness of some peoples I have travelled amongst. But they would always be civil to a stranger and do him a kindness if he were in need or trouble. They are ready to show consideration. And their fairness and love of fair play are remarkable. Nothing rouses them more surely to anger than unfair treatment—whether of themselves or others. The underdog always has a fair chance among them—a better chance sometimes than the top dog; for often underdogs deserve what they are getting; they have often been snappy and impertinent to the top dog and worried him past all canine endurance.

And, talking of dogs, the people are devoted lovers of animals. The mere reference to a dog in a public speech will draw forth cheers. And they have societies for the special purpose of preventing cruelty to horses, dogs and animals of all kinds. This fondness of animals naturally attracts a stranger to them.

Then they are a very orderly people, and their crowds are nearly always good-humoured. The Towne crowds are a wonder of good-humour. Right through the General Stop there was scarcely a sign of ill-temper. In addition, they are a reliable people. You

can trust them. They pride themselves that their word is as good as their bond. In their great war they had lent money to some nations and borrowed from another. At the end of the war the debtors paid little back but the people of Ourownland sturdily shouldered their obligations and repaid their creditor.

Seeing that they had these qualities of civility, orderliness, dependability, good-humour, love of fair-play and love of animals, I grew to like them. They were not so repellent as I thought they might be. They could anyhow be trusted. And if I were civil to them they would be civil to me. I took to them, therefore. And slowly they took to me. They do not hurry in giving their friendship. They are a slow, deliberate people. Once they have given their confidence or given their friendship, they hate to take it back. So they eye a stranger long and steadily before they give themselves away. But coming to the conclusion that I could be trusted and that I liked them they slowly came to like me. I had won their confidence.

And once having gained their friendship they revealed to me all manner of hidden beauties I had never suspected they possessed. I could see their secret longings and hopes and strivings—their yearnings to be of some *use* in the world—to be able to *do* something—to do *more*. I could see kindnesses which were hidden from the ordinary sight of men. The secret heroism and self-sacrifice of their women I particularly noted—their yearnings for the happiness of their children, and the lengths they would go to secure it.

The more I gave out my heart to them the more of all this hidden life was shown to me. And so we grew together. I am a native of India—born in the

Himalaya. But I make no secret of it that I have come to love Ouwownland, and even its climate. And it has been through this love for her that I have been able to develop this wonderful faculty of Endsight. And by means of it I have been able dimly to discern that high end towards which Ouwownland, unknown to herself, is surely working—that end which is at the same time the deep driving motive of all her activities.

So attracted was I by Ouwownland that I visited it several times, and eventually married a lady of the country, and have now for some years been settled at Holm, a lovely little place twenty miles from Towne—being thus in the very heart of Ouwownland. And as I now speak the language almost as well as the natives themselves, this has been a great means of helping me to acquire the faculty of Endsight.

And what helped to bring me in touch with the people at Holm was my talking to them of my travels. They love to hear about adventures in far countries. So they used to get up meetings at which I would tell them of my journeys in the Himalaya and China and Central Asia. My exploration in the great ice mountains, and my adventures among wild frontier tribes they particularly enjoyed hearing about. And they were very kind and attentive. Even a women's society held a meeting for me to tell them about the flowers I had seen in various parts of the world.

Thus I came to know the people at Holm and they to know me. And a lovely little place it is. It lies in a valley with hills rising two or three hundred feet high on either side. In the valley bottom are fields and meadows with a little stream running through them. And on the south side is a succession of parks with beautiful woods of beech and oak. And whether

those woods are more beautiful in the spring or in the autumn I could never make up my mind. As soon as ever the new year had begun I used to hunt the hedgerows for the first fresh shoots of primrose leaves. Then for the primroses themselves. Then for the violets. And then for the bluebells. And by now the beeches would be clothed in the most delicate green. And graceful birch trees would vie with them for the palm of feathery loveliness. And beneath the fresh foliage of the beech trees there would be in one wood a regular carpet of purple bluebells—a veritable fairyland. And one spot I knew, which I would visit every year on the exactly right day when I would see primroses, violets, anemones, and bluebells all together. Just there the primroses would last on till the bluebells began.

Perhaps nothing could be lovelier than these woods of Holm in the spring. And the birds would then be singing as I have never heard them sing in any other country, though according to W. H. Hudson they cannot compare with the birds of South America. Anyhow, these Holm birds, the thrushes, blackbirds and larks used to set me thrilling with joy in the spring. The thrush I used to think could not be beaten till by April the blackbird began, and then I would think its deep sweet contralto touched deeper into me than the thrush. Still it was the lark that all the time I really preferred. The blackbird had rather a plaintive note. The lark was always trembling with joy. The thrush and the blackbird sat on a branch to sing. The lark in its ecstasy sprang upward to the skies.

With all these joys and beauties of spring how could I think of autumn in comparison? Yet there is the fact that in the autumn those beech woods of

Holm were clothed in such a glory of russet and red and yellow, and looked so golden as the evening sun struck upon them, that I used to forget the beauties of the spring. I used to cling on tightly to every moment when the weather was fine enough to show their glory. And I would note and treasure for the coming winter every detail I could fix. It would have to last me through the mists and chills of November and December till in January the young primrose shoots would appear to cheer me with the promise of spring.

As to the people themselves, what chiefly interested me in them was their religion. I had two reasons for this—the one practical, the other personal.

I had invariably found in India and on the Indian frontier that if I wanted to get on with the people I had to deal with, and really to influence them, I must know about their religion and take a genuine interest in it. With the Indians of India itself this is especially the case. Religion is the one thing that really interests them. Politics and business come a long way behind. And sport further still. The Mohamedan tribesmen of the frontier also loved to discuss religion. And of course in Tibet religion is the paramount influence: the country is ruled by priests and I was bound to know something about their Buddhism if I was to have any weight at all with them. I have had therefore for many years good practical reasons for being interested in religion.

The personal reason for being so concerned with it is that it has always been for me far and away the most interesting and important thing in life. Why? Because it deals with life as a whole, and with life as a whole in its connection with the universe as a whole. It is concerned with what is going on in the heart of

things, and with how we are related to the heart of things. It seeks to know all it can of that Creative Spirit from which we and all things spring, and of how we can work in with that Spirit and carry out Its purposes. Religion is something fundamental, and gives the final aim and direction to our lives. I am bound thus to be interested in it.

These were my two main reasons for interesting myself in the religion of the people at Holm. I had another. In India and in Asia generally it is commonly believed that the people of Ourownland are thoroughly materialistic, and care practically nothing for religion. It is believed that their one aim in life is to accumulate riches. They are greatly admired for their mechanical genius and for their numerous inventions and discoveries. But it is generally believed in Asia that the people of Ourownland care nothing for religion. And I wanted to see how far this was the case or not.

And if they were so little attached to religion as was supposed in India I was anxious to find out if there was any possibility of Ourownland going deliberately against religion as Russia has done. In other countries there have been wars of religion. In India there has been much persecution of Hindus by Mohamedans and of Mohamedans by Hindus. And in many countries of Europe there has been persecution of Protestants by Roman Catholics and of Roman Catholics by Protestants. But in all these cases it has been the very zeal for religion that has caused these persecutions. In Russia, for the first time, at any rate on so huge a scale, there has been the most awful persecution of *all* religion—of religion as such. The Bolshevist Government tried—and is trying—to stamp religion clean out of the country. It is for-

bidden in the schools, and crass materialism is taught in its place. It is publicly mocked at and derided by Government agents. In the State newspapers it is held up to ridicule. Hundreds of priests have been done to death. Thousands have been ruined. Bishops have had to drive cabs or sweep crossings to earn a living.

Is any such anti-religious feeling likely to spring up in Ouwownland? And, even if nothing so extreme and violent is likely to happen, is there any prospect of Ouwownland becoming just as irreligious at heart? This is what I wanted to find out.

I was quite aware that in Ouwownland were numerous Churches and sects. There was the National Church to which most of the people nominally adhere. There was the old Roman Catholic Church through which the inhabitants were originally converted to Christianity. And there were many new sects of religions. But when all is said and done the bulk of the population very seldom attend any services of these Churches. Most of the inhabitants are but nominal adherents. There is also much atheism, and rationalism and materialism about. And many scientific men all over the world hold that religion is a thing of the past—a superstition which the human race will soon grow out of. And I wanted to make sure whether religion would gradually dwindle away in the country, or whether it was still a powerful factor, and likely to grow and develop.

This seemed to me to be the most important thing to study in Ouwownland. And I found at Holm a remarkably interesting movement in progress which I was able to observe with my faculty of Endsight, and which eventually furnished me with a conclusive answer to the above questions.

This movement was a religious movement and had sprung up among the laity. I got to know of it through Golden Promyss, a delightful young fellow typical of his country and the age. Though he was not the prime originator of the movement he was its most active executant; and I purposely kept closely in touch with him, and through him was able to watch its progress.

CHAPTER III

GOLDEN PROMYSS

GOLDEN PROMYSS interested me because he represented better than any one else I knew what was really going on in the heart and soul of the people—going on there without their ever knowing what was happening within them. What he thought and felt and said and did to-day they would all be thinking and feeling and saying and doing to-morrow. That is why I took particular note of him. He seemed to me to represent what it was in the heart of the people to do but which they had not yet the sight to see was so needful for them. He was the very incarnation of the soul of Ourownland.

He was a straight, clean-living young man with an alert, fearless look about him. And though he had a perfect hatred of sentimentality, this did not mean that he had no sentiment. He was crammed full of it—and of very deep, true sentiment. It only meant that he had learned to keep his feelings under control. He had been through a great war and he had found there that he must *economise* his emotions. He must have them in hand. He must not fritter them wastefully away. He must only express them at the right moment and in the right place. So he might be seen going about whistling, singing and laughing in an outwardly happy-go-lucky way when all the time he was inwardly seething with intensest emotion.

It was the same with his ambition. He would seem to care nothing about it. But he was no loafer or

saunterer. He meant to lead a worth-while life. And he evidently had vision.

Indeed, whenever I saw him he gave me the impression of a man possessed with the vision of a dawn breaking far on ahead who was pressing on hard to catch the first glimpse of the glorious day-spring. All around might be still dark and there might be a stiff climb yet to the mountain ridge from which the sunrise would be seen. But he could just detect to the eastward the first faint flush of the coming dawn, and be eagerly pressing up the mountain side to catch it. If only he could reach the crest—and get there in time—he would see glistening mountains and valleys radiant with the rosy light of early dawn. And he must at all costs be there to see it.

In his face, so thoughtful when in repose, I could almost see the vision myself. But his face seldom was in repose. He was no mere visionary. He had more than the rapt contemplation of the saint or the seer. He was all eager activity. He was panting to get on. He was impatient of every impediment. He would brush it aside if it were not too great, or clamber over it, if it were too large to be swept out of the way, or find a way round if it could be neither brushed aside nor clambered over. Anyhow, no obstacle must be allowed to stand in the way as he made for the mountain top.

And when he reached the top he must be able to see the prospect from it. He must cultivate an eye for beauty or he would never see the full glory of the dawn when he had, at last, reached the mountain crest. The beasts of the forest had sharp enough eyes—much sharper than a man's—and they looked on the sunrise day after day. But not one of them had

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neither spot nor blemish nor any such thing. Otherwise how should he ever be able to see the beauty of the dawn when it came.

All this I could detect in Golden Promyss as I used to see him at this time. But he was no idle dreamer. He was right in *life* and had to earn a living. He was still down in the valley and he had to make his way through the heavy obstacles and all the muck and mud and dirt of the flat low-lying land, and then climb the steep and rugged mountain-side—and climb it while there was still great darkness around and there were only the stars to lighten his way upward—before he could see the beauty of the dawn.

And as a young man he must have had many temptations to lure him from his aim. The upward path would be steep, the way unknown, the prize uncertain. Why take it when pleasure was close at hand and could be had for the taking? Why trouble about the joys of the spirit which had to be won—and won with terrible effort—when the lusts of the flesh could be satisfied without any effort whatever? He must have been sorely tempted to stay on the level, or anyhow taste for a moment or two the sweets of the flesh before setting out on his daring adventure. The way for a young man is never very easy.

And besides these temptations of the flesh he must have had to contend against the degrading influence of those who would have him devote himself to comfort—to becoming efficient in gold-winning, and in acquiring the means to live an easy and comfortable life. There are always many well-wishers who, with the best intentions, would mislead him and try to deflect him from the course he had set himself.

Fortunately his own natural disposition had held

him firmly back from following any such foolish advice. Some are content with living on the level, and they live there lives of placid contentment. But of these he could never be one. His heart would have ached to death if he had remained among them. He had only one life to live and he must make the most of it. He must get up out of the ruck. He must scale the mountain. He must make a name for himself and bring credit to his country. To make money enough to live in luxury was not an aim worth having. He would have to make money sufficient for his bodily needs. But those needs were few. His secondary efforts could satisfy them. And his main energies he would give to what was really most worth while.

This was the impression I formed of him when I first met him. I found that he had started life as a boy in a large biscuit factory run on up-to-date lines which had been established in the place a few years before, and which was flourishing and expanding with great rapidity. His daily task had been monotonous. With many others he had to stand by and feed a machine. And the roar of the machinery was deafening. There was nothing very spiritual about his work. And it would have deadened his soul if he had had nothing more than this to look forward to.

But Manew Fakchurer, the originator and owner of the business, was a man who looked after his workmen. He had the sense to see how greatly the success of his business depended upon the goodwill and goodtemper and efficiency of his workmen. He knew well how fearfully monotonous the feeding of machinery was—for he had gone through the mill himself as a boy. He had therefore provided for the recreation—for the real *re-creation*—of his workpeople outside of

working hours. For eight hours a day they had to work—and work hard, for no slacking during work hours was tolerated. But, once the work was over, every form of recreation was provided—games of many different kinds, indoor and out, a swimming bath, a library, a hall for lectures, concerts, amateur theatricals, entertainments of all kinds. And men and women mixed freely together in the different musical, theatrical and sports societies that were formed.

Scope was here given for individuals to show and exercise their special talents. A porter might have a wonderful tenor voice. A man who spent his day in packing biscuits might have talent as a comedian and love to display his gift in amusing people in the evening. Each had a chance of exercising and exhibiting his peculiar talent before his fellows and receiving their applause.

And by mixing with his people in their play hours Manew Fakchurer got to know them well and to know how to place them in his works. He would frequently address them, too, on his business—interest them in it, encourage them to bring forward suggestions for its improvement, and create a kind of *esprit de corps* so that they should all identify themselves with the welfare of the concern.

And Golden Promyss had thoroughly entered into the spirit of the business and taken advantage of the facilities afforded. He had felt the monotony of minding a machine. But that monotonous work had at least left his mind more free to develop itself outside working hours. And he had made good use of the opportunities for culture afforded by his employer.

And these entertainments were not all. In the village itself there was plenty going on. There was

a Men's Club and many societies of different kinds, frequent matches at different games with other villages, social gatherings, dances, concerts, amateur theatricals, political meetings, and, sometimes, excursions to Towne where he could see the sights, go to a theatre, be present at some national ceremonial, and feel himself in the great movement of the central life of the country. And from these advantages, too, he had profited.

So he had developed into too bright and eager a young man to escape notice for long. He had caught the eye of his employer and been taken from the hardest drudgery of the factory and placed in a position where his intelligence could be used. And from tending machines he had gradually risen to directing men.

To this peaceful life at Holm there had suddenly come a violent wrench. World events had rushed off at such a pace that the placid statesmen at the head of affairs had been wholly unable to control them. Instead of riding the events they had let events ride them. And before the quiet citizens of Ouwownland could realise what was happening they were swirled into the maelstrom of war.

A call had immediately been made for volunteers. And Golden Promyss had answered like a man. He had no notion what war meant. But his country was in danger. All that he held dearer than life was threatened. And he had readily offered his services—and in offering them felt an inner satisfaction he had never imagined could be possible. He was now a man. His country wanted him and he felt his manhood.

Dreary, deadening months of training had followed in which all the holy enthusiasm at answering his country's call had seemed to evaporate. When he

was straining to be off fighting hand to hand with the enemy he had been compelled to undergo trivial, irksome, wearisome, seemingly-useless training. When statesmen were speaking eloquently of patriotic sentiment the drill sergeants and officers were addressing him in language which should shame a scavenger.

There had been a momentary return of the original enthusiasm when, after many months' training, his battalion was actually moved to the fighting zone. But even there the dreary monotony of preparation had continued. And there too the stark horrors of war were continually evident—the procession of wounded returning from the front, the mangled bodies, the sightless men, the scared inhabitants of the country, the ruined villages and crops. Much complaining there was too. Proper preparations had not been made. Big enough guns or the best rifles or enough ammunition had not been provided. Lives were being uselessly squandered. The allies were not giving proper support. And so on.

Then had come the actual fighting, and awful losses and no apparent gain. Many a comrade dead now. And the enemy still as strong as ever—apparently impregnable. All the glamour of war gone. Nothing but its horrors and its terrors, and a great emptiness of heart.

Yet, as Golden Promyss discovered afterwards, there had been a great deal more. He had scarcely realised it at the time. But later in repose he knew that that time was the great time of his life. With death ever imminent he was then stung to live at his highest pitch; and there was great comradeship—the comradeship of dangers shared, and work and fighting done shoulder to shoulder—and splendid emulation—the fear of being behindhand, the vying with the

bravest. Those had been great days—the happiest of his life. It was grand to go over the top, and see all the men and hear the guns. *Then* he had really lived. Life afterwards was flat and dull in comparison.

Golden Promyss had returned unscathed, but sobered and grave. He was readily re-employed in the factory. And for a time was thankful enough to be quietly engaged. But he had taken part in great events. He had visited strange countries. His outlook on life had been enlarged. He was not content with merely earning a living: he wanted to be working again for his country.

And this feeling was greatly quickened as he used to visit Towne for the great national ceremonials—the various memorial services, the peace celebrations, or the funeral of some distinguished leader. Here he would feel the national sentiment concentrated. His pride in his country would grow, and he would feel that expression was being given to his love for her.

Still he was growing restless. He wanted to be up and doing again. And about this time a great statesman came down to the village and made a speech with an eloquent appeal to the young men who had served in the war. He thanked them for the efforts and sacrifices they had made. And he called upon them to cling tightly on to that which they had so dearly learnt in war—the need of firm discipline, of steady courage, of staunch comradeship—and then to go from that to the even higher heroism which was needed now in peace to make their beloved country all it should be.

The words were like magic. They touched Golden Promyss in the most sensitive part of his soul. His ambition was fired. The call had once more come

had a good talk with her, and come to know her till the evening of the catastrophe.

It occurred at a dance. And whether it was youth calling to youth, or whether it was the movement of the dance, or the appeal of the music, who can say? Anyhow he felt himself carried right off his feet. He had never known anything so sweet. He had enjoyed dancing and talking with other girls before. But they had left him where he was. Now he was lifted right out of himself and wafted up to unbelievable heights.

So dainty she was—so delicate! And yet what fibre! What vehemence of approval or disgust! What an exquisite standard by which she so vehemently approved or condemned! And what satisfaction to find that what he most valued she also most highly prized!

And then what unexpected beauty in her face as she gave expression to her love of beauty! How her eyes glowed! How every feature seemed to be shining with love! Never had he imagined anything so lovely! And as that night he recalled her look he knew that he was fatally and fearfully in love.

Here was a dilemma.

He was in love to the root of his being, and with one who, his soul told him, was worthy of his whole self. But ought he to give way to it? Ought he not to pull himself together, have nothing of it, and thrust it fiercely from him before it had time to absorb his life? He had only just made up his mind to devote himself to his country's service. If he married would he not have to give up this ambition and devote all his time to providing a home? Did not men of God in every country, when they were deadly in earnest about the spiritual life, eschew marriage, and ought not he? Ought he not, like

Roman Catholic priests, to make the supreme sacrifice for the spiritual welfare of men? Would not marriage be a drag on him, hold him back from his purpose, keep him stagnating on the plains when he ought to be climbing the heights?

These were the torturing doubts he had for many a day. But over against them he set the palpable fact that his love was already lifting him above the plains. It was making a man of him. He felt more capable. Hidden capacities were developing. He was both stronger and more tender. He could do more. And he could see more—he could see beauties and goodnesses he had hitherto been blind to. Also it was in the natural order of things for a young man to love—and very, very sweet. How then could it be a hindrance?

He must consult Vera Love (his deceased mother's sister, of whom more presently) who had become his spiritual mother. He would not refer his particular case to her. He would be very subtle. He would talk of matrimony in the abstract. By indirections he would find directions out. She was very understanding. She had his truest welfare at heart. She had great experience in matters of the heart. And she knew Grace Hope too. She would be able to give him the advice he wanted.

Accordingly he spoke to her of matrimony in general. But he was not likely to deceive her. He was as transparent as glass. She could see straight through him and out the other side. She could see the working of his heart and soul. She knew that it was about himself that he was really speaking. And she realised that the decision now to be taken would be crucial for his whole life. And she was highly anxious about it, for she looked upon him as her own

son and had high hopes for his future. To her the important thing was his career. She must see to it that he made the most of himself. Nothing must be allowed to stand in the way of that. The question was whether marriage would. And she did not think it need—marriage with the right person, that is to say, and marriage properly conceived.

Speaking then of matrimony in general, but really referring to him in particular, and to Grace Hope, whom she guessed was the person he was in love with, she said oracularly that whether matrimony was good for a couple or not depended entirely on themselves. It might degrade them, or it might elevate them. It might be hell or it might be heaven. That depended on themselves. They had in the first place to be exceedingly particular in their choice of one another. For there could be no going back on the choice once it was made. But if they were sure of themselves, and would keep hold of themselves, and not dissipate their love, it might be used as the finest instrument for good. It ought not to be a hindrance to a man. It ought to be a help. It should bring him experience he could never gain without it. It was a venture, it is true. But it was a venture a man bent on big things ought to take. He would reach higher with marriage than without it. Marriage would not draw him away from God. It would not deflect him from his course. It would only add to the zest with which he would struggle upward. It came from God. It was God's way of perpetuating the race. Woman was made for man and man for woman. It entailed restraint. They must be content in marriage as before. They should not indulge themselves an iota beyond what marriage was ordained for. But, provided they did not use it as

sheer license for fleshly indulgence, and recognised the sacred obligation upon them to use it with all due constraint, it should lead them straight to God. More, it should invigorate them for the ascent.

Golden Promyss felt the force of Vera Love's argument. As he enquired of himself he could honestly say that the love which Grace Hope had called forth was of the sweetest purity and did not lead him away from God but right to Him. His love seemed to flame straight up to heaven. He was not less but far more capable of working for the spiritual life of his country. For the fire of his love only served to purify him and make him a completer man. And he would keep it at that all through his married life.

He therefore decided once for all that if Grace Hope would accept him he would marry her. Marriage was not to be a bar in his life. He would use it as a means to his highest end. And he vowed before God that his love for Grace should not decrease but only increase his zeal for his country's welfare.

But Golden Promyss might make up his mind to ask Grace to be his wife yet her consent had still to be attained. And this was not easy. For her sensitive nature had made her withdraw within herself after the heavenly evening. When she returned to the cold gray light of everyday work she felt quite different. She shuddered at having shown too much of the inner sanctuary of her soul; and she erected an icy barrier against him when they met. And through this he had to thaw his way.

Her mother was another formidable obstacle. She allowed that Golden Promyss was a perfectly good young fellow. But he was poor and she was naturally anxious that her daughter should marry someone who could at least give her a comfortable home.

However, these obstacles Vera Love, with her wonderful understanding in all spiritual things—especially things of the heart—soon removed. She intuitively divined how matters stood. She spoke to Grace of Golden Promyss, told her of his aspirations, and hinted to her that he could bring to any woman what was more than material wealth—and that was happiness. With him she might not have luxury but she would have contentment of soul and high interest in life.

Gradually she brought Grace and Promyss together and he told Grace of his love for her, of his hesitation lest it should interfere with his ambitions for his country and of his subsequent conviction that with her, if only she could give him that love he craved, he would succeed far better than he ever would alone. She was not a little piqued that he should put his country before her. She seemed to be only a secondary consideration in his mind. On the other hand, there was no doubt of his love. It was there palpitating beside her. Before it the icy barrier slowly melted away. She became again as she was on the night of the dance. The first feeling of pique finally vanished, and she gave herself to him freely, utterly, and for ever.

They were married by Vicker. And soon little ones began to appear and they had a hard struggle to keep the home going. He carried on steadily with his work in the factory. But it brought him only a meagre livelihood and he had many a temptation to abandon his ambition and give more of his energies to improving his material position. And it was now not himself only that he had to consider but Grace too, and the children. It was hard on them. It was asking much of them that they should be content with the bare

necessaries of life while he spent on his spiritual ambition the time and energy that might have brought them in so many comforts and luxuries.

Yet to have given up his ambition would have been now almost a physical impossibility. It had become an integral part of himself. It *was* himself. And Grace herself now recognised this. She had at first feared that this absorbing love of country might take him away from love of her and love of the children. But year by year experience was showing her that the more he did to satisfy his ambition the more love he seemed to have for home. So she deliberately spurred him on in his ambitions. Only as he could satisfy his soul would he ever be happy at home.

And to satisfy his soul—to fit himself for the great task he had in mind—he read books on religion, and on philosophy and science, and lives of Jesus, and of the great spiritual geniuses. He tried to form for himself a true philosophy of life, a true conception of the world and of our relation to it, and of what we should aim at. And he attended the services in Church. But even though he had Grace with him he would feel only in the outer courts of the Temple—never in the Holy Place itself. He wanted to get nearer to God than he ever got in Church.

Out in Nature he seemed to approach Him far more closely. And he would stride out into the woods and up on to the downs; and in the blue infinity of the sky, in the glory of sunsets, and in the swift scudding clouds he would really feel in the presence of God. And there on the moorland he would drink in the great glory of God and fill himself with it and tighten himself together for the great task he had before him.

But it was the task itself that lingered. He had

heard the call. He had prepared himself to respond to it. What actually to do was not yet clear.

And he had had enough of preparation. He wanted now to be doing. He wanted to be at something which would be carrying out his main intention. He was now in the prime of life. He had established himself well in the factory and in the village. His married life was all he could wish. Yet, in spite of all, he had a vague dissatisfaction with himself. He had not hit off what would give scope for the best in him. That best was continually reaching out after some work which would appease his hunger. But the exact work had not yet come to hand.

He was in this state of unsatisfied longing when he had a talk with Vera Love which showed him the way to the very thing he wanted and finally determined the course of his life.

But before I relate what that thing was, and how Vera Love came to think about it for him, I must first give a fuller account of Vera Love herself. Otherwise it would be impossible to understand how it was that she had such an influence over Golden Promyss and came to be the inspiration of his life.

CHAPTER V

VERA LOVE

VERA LOVE was, by some ten years, the younger sister of Golden Promyss' mother, and had, as I have said, been a kind of spiritual mother to him after her death. And she had been this because of her quick understanding in spiritual matters and an ache within her to be of spiritual service, especially to the young.

As a little child she had been the darling of the family—the youngest of five. And sunny had been her days. But in later life she had experienced much suffering. She had had to face some of life's hardest realities. And these might have bruised her delicate nature past all healing. In actual fact they had only strengthened it. They had only served to deepen her sympathies. And through them she had acquired the wonderful power of understanding which had been, and which was to be, so helpful to Golden Promyss.

She was the daughter of Faith whose family had been attached to the land for centuries. And when quite small she had been both very, very good and also very, very naughty. She would know so clearly what she wanted, and would want it with such passion, that if she were thwarted in getting it she would burst into a fury of rage. She would be a very tempest, storming about in ungovernable fashion. At times, also, when she was wanting something, but did not know quite what, she would be fractious and difficult.

But she would know very well when she *had* been

naughty. And afterwards, when she was saying her prayers with her long-suffering, but firm, mother she would be so full of remorse, and so candid in her confession of the naughtiness, that she would have won forgiveness from the most flinty-hearted.

She had a thoughtful, very expressive face, as quickly changing from mood to mood as an April day. And it and her large eyes, sparkling with interest, always spoke more eloquently than her tongue. Her face invariably said far more than her words.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about her as a child was her sensitivity. She would quiver in instant response to the slightest impression, and be in a passion of joy or grief, with the suddenest change from one to the other. Tears were never far from the surface and were heart-rending when they came. A momentary coldness in her father or mother would send them brimming to her eyes. But they would disappear as quickly as they came if love were shown her, and she would then be as radiant as the sun shining through a shower.

Very loving she was and very loyal and staunch in her loves: it was agony to her to part from anyone she had given her heart to. But she was also very discriminating in her love. She did not give it to everyone. And only on occasion did she show her love even to the approved ones. Sometimes she was very off-hand. But on the occasions when she *did* show her love she would kiss and hug with such vehemence, and would be so tenderly endearing, that centuries of aloofness could be easily forgiven.

Life of all kinds enthralled her. She loved every living thing that came her way, whether it were a dog, or a horse, or a cat, or the thrushes and black-

birds, or robins or butterflies in the garden, or the larks singing in the fields, or the rabbits running about in the woods. All were a joy to her—even the snails. And for flowers she had a peculiar affection. She loved their colour, and their purity and exquisite forms; and she would pet and caress them. Wild flowers were a special joy. They had about them a romantic attraction no tame, artificial garden flower ever had. And to hunt in the woods for the first primroses and violets was the delight of delights.

She had the seeing eye and the hearing ear beyond most children—and the more she saw in the woods and sky and distant hills, and the more she heard of the sweet sounds there, the more mystery did she see and the more did her wonder at the glory grow. She would perhaps shudder in fear at the thunder and lightning. But it was not all sheer fright. There was something in the sound and the fury which fascinated her.

And she was incessantly wanting to know the how and the why of all about her. Who made the world? God. Then who made God? How did He paint the butterflies? Where did He get the paint from? She would probe into the very heart of things. And where her curiosity could not be satisfied she would give her imagination rein.

Much of her time was spent in a world of imaginary persons and imaginary things. And these would be more truly real to her than the actual physical persons and things about her—and she would be far more interested in them! Away beyond the furthest hills and down where the sun set was a lovely world of good, beautiful people and happy children and glorious flowers and wonderful birds and animals. This was her paradise—her heaven. And even indoors

she could sit on the floor and pick lovely flowers all round her and speak to fairy people. And she would play all manner of imaginary games.

She loved being read to. She loved the stories themselves. She loved the beauty of sound as her mother read and gave full value to each word. And she loved the pictures in the story books: each would open up new vistas of delight and marvellous adventures. The great Bible stories and their stirring language she especially liked. She would pass through the whole gamut of emotions as she heard them read for the first time. Now she would be in an agony of compassion and now jumping with joy. There are no such stories in the world, or stories told in such moving language, as the Bible stories. Her mother had the art of reading them to produce the fullest effect. And they entered deeply into little Vera's sensitive soul.

Music also was an intense delight to her. She would quiver with excitement at one moment, or be still and silent, eyes wide open with wonder at another, or again jump and dance with joy.

Dancing she loved too. She was light as a fairy, and would dance with her soul and with her whole body—legs, arms, head, hands all moving in perfect time and with fullest ease and enjoyment.

And through her imaginary world, through the Bible stories, and through the music, and perhaps too the dancing, she was building up for herself the loveliest relationship with God and with Jesus.

God to her was something very clean and pure, as well as good, and He was inside her trying to make her good. And Jesus was constantly by her. She could not see him but he was none the less real for that, more real than any living person, and part of

her very life. He was to her the emblem and pattern of all that was good and beautiful and pure. He would be hurt if she did anything wrong but so forgiving if she confessed to him what she had done and really meant to be better in future—and so glad when she was good! He was indeed so holy she could tell him only of lovely things, but he was also so human she was not afraid of having her fun: she knew he would love seeing her enjoying herself.

And she always prayed to him—prayed to be made a good girl. And her mother noted that a peculiarity of her prayers was her thankfulness. She would be perpetually thanking God for some beautiful flower, or bird, or day's enjoyment.

A girl of so high-strung a nature was necessarily a cause of great anxiety. Her mother felt the fearful responsibility upon her to direct her aright. She might so easily inflict upon her girl some irreparable injury or give her a wrong direction. For Vera seemed to remember every little thing that was told her and take things tremendously to heart. And with the girl's susceptibility to wounding words, her tenderness of heart, her loyalty to her loves, and her terrible earnestness her mother feared greatly for her when she would have to go forth from the shelter of the home into the rough of the world. And Vera did, in fact, at school and in life later on suffer grievously. Her heart was always wrung at suffering in others whenever she saw it, or even read of it in stories. And her sensitive soul winced at the slightest touch. And it was often not merely touched but roughly bruised, and sometimes pierced to the quick till she quivered in the acme of agony.

She did indeed suffer. But her capacity for enjoyment far exceeded her sensitivity to pain; and it

carried her triumphantly through every trial. As a girl she was bubbling over with joy. And though she was an aloof girl in certain ways, and lived in a solitary world of her own, yet when she was with other children she threw herself into the common enjoyment. She loved her companions. And she loved being loved.

And in her girlhood a remarkable trait developed in her. She had always been fond of joining in singing hymns and of listening to sacred music. And from this, and from the intonation of her mother's voice as she said her prayers with her and read the Bible stories, and also from the general tone of the services in Church, she had early imbibed a peculiar feeling for *holiness*. An intense reverence for holy things had developed within her. And as she grew in years so did this reverence for the things of God deepen in her soul.

And her love for the gentle and beautiful Jesus whom her mother had portrayed to her and who had always lived with her in the imaginary but very real world of her childhood remained with her in girlhood. For it was a very *human* Jesus who loved little children and birds and flowers, and who was yet divinely pure and beautiful, and most, most holy that Vera had been told of, and on him she had come to pour forth all her powers of reverence, and admiration and worship. This pure and holy Jesus, who was yet a man while personifying all the attributes of God, had become for her her idol and ideal. Her imagination, and the strong dramatising instinct she possessed made her picture him to her in her mind. She would endow him—and in superlative degree—with every quality she most admired. He would be the pattern and standard of all she *ought*

to be—and of spotless purity and perfection. And so really would she feel his presence that not only in childhood but throughout her life he was more real to her than persons she could see with her bodily eyes; and he more deeply influenced her life.

Then with her love of imitating what she greatly admired she would strive with all her might to be like him. But alas! she could not succeed. She was full of wickedness. Her passionate temper was not under control and would often break out. She had jealousies, too, of girls who were loved more than she was. And known only to herself she had her spite and hatreds—and impure thoughts. Things were very, very hard. There were so many temptations, so many distractions in life and so much to contaminate the purity she longed to preserve.

And outside her home and the Church there were so many inducements to do wrong, so little encouragement to do right; she could not help giving way at times. She was very far from the perfection she aimed at. She was no angel in her own eyes. In her secret soul she was bowed down with remorse at her failings. How could she come near Jesus as she was. She would only soil the stainless beauty of her Lord. And she would be in great distress at times, till the natural joyousness of her nature re-asserted itself, and she would feel that anyhow she really was doing her best, and Jesus would know how hard she was striving.

Then came the most important event in her girlhood days—her confirmation. She did not pretend that she understood all that Vicker, the clergyman, taught her. But she did very deeply feel his desire, and her dear mother's most earnest yearning, for her spiritual happiness. She could feel her parents, her

elder sister, the clergyman, and the whole congregation deeply longing and praying that she should lead a pure and holy life completely dedicated to the service of God. She was greatly impressed. And all her passionate soul went out in response. She threw her whole self out to God. She vowed to give her life to holiness. She would resolutely put from her every evil thought or desire and think and do only what her beloved Lord Jesus would have her think and do, so that she might always be worthy of him and be able to be with him.

As she made this vow before God, and as the sweet music fell upon her, she was overcome with an abiding joy; and deep inward peace of soul was hers.

And this inner peace she was soon sorely to need. For the sunny days of childhood, when all the world seemed to smile upon her, were passing now. She was entering a period of storms and stresses. And she did indeed require a mainstay for her soul.

First her dear mother, who had been a perfect angel to her, and guided her so sweetly through the impetuous days of childhood, died; and a few years later her elder sister, the mother of Golden Promyss. She was crushed to the earth. With her terrible capacity for suffering it did not seem possible that she could ever rise again. But the very poignancy of her anguish seemed to drive her closer to God. Her mother had trusted Him and so would she. And in His everlasting arms she did find comfort. Just as Mother Earth takes into her bosom all the bruised and broken flowers, and out of them brings fresh glories into being, so did God out of Vera's grief bring new joys to birth. She had vowed her life to God and now she was possessed with a perfect passion

for holiness and filled with that joy that only seeking holiness can give.

As a child she had pictured Jesus to herself. Now she would read everything she could find about him so as to know and understand him better and through him know and understand God the more. She read every "life" of him she could procure, and lives of all the great Christian saints, from St. Francis, Catherine of Siena, Saint Theresa, and Madame Guyon to George Fox and John Wesley. From their lives she would try to extract the very essence of holiness and absorb it into herself. And if there were *degrees* of holiness, it would be holiness in its highest degree that she would seek to achieve.

Reading of the heroic lives that Jesus and those who had sought to follow him had led had set her spirited soul seething with ambition to emulate them. Where they had gone she would go too. She would be as holy as any. No one should excel her in her love of Jesus.

But here a perplexity arose. Some of the saints were Roman Catholic. Some were Protestant. The Roman Catholics thought the only true way to God was through the Church of Rome. The Protestants denied that the Roman Catholic was the only true Church. Then she read of holy men of God among the Hindus and Mohamedans. They also had their conception of God and of the way to Him. Which was the right conception and the right way?

She never doubted the existence of God. Her love of her mother and of nature kept her true. When she got out in the fields and on the downs, under the blue sky, she felt the near presence of God and saw evidence of His working in the flowers and the life all about her. That in itself showed forth His glory.

That a great spiritual Power was at work in the world she never ceased to doubt. But what *kind* of Power this was and how she could *best* get in touch with It was what troubled her mind when so many Godly men said so many different things. She would go up to Towne and attend services of all the different denominations of religion to see if she could get any help there.

She attended a service at a great Roman Catholic Cathedral. It was magnificent. And she was impressed by the signs of personal piety and devotion in members of the congregation. At High Mass, the adoration of the Eucharist was clearly a form of devotion which appealed to them and was very precious to them. In the devout figures of some women she could see the glow of love for Christ flaming up within them. And she was greatly drawn towards them. She loved to adore her Lord. And she would like to have felt like they did. She knew, too, the good work which these Roman Catholics did. They were not only contemplative and given to adoration and worship. They were very active in bringing about the Reign of God upon earth. They were active in the mission field. And they were active at home. They did great good, especially did they uphold *family* life, and that was truly good.

What she did not like about what she saw and heard of the Roman Catholic Church was the small part which the congregation took in the services and the sense of domination there was everywhere—the sense of priestly domination. She noticed that the members of the congregation hardly participated at all in the service. There seemed to be too much authority, too much dogmatism, too much compulsion of the soul, too little scope for individual in-

dependence in what is so supremely important *for* the individual.

To a great many men and women this strong authority appealed. They craved for security. And in so ancient and world-wide an institution as the Roman Catholic Church they found what they wanted. They felt secure in it. It claimed Divine authority for its decrees and they would not presume to pit their puny selves against the wisdom of an institution so constituted. The faith of the great Church should be their faith. They would cease all turbulent questionings and repose restfully in her bosom and be obedient to her will.

This was the attitude of many millions of human beings and undoubtedly it brought peace to them. Vera Love it did not suit. Great and good as was the Institution she could not regard it as infallible. There were other Institutions just as good, just as wise but which thought differently. And she had no reason for believing that they were wrong and the Roman Church right. She must preserve her own independence of soul. She could never bring herself to submissively handing over her soul to the spiritual direction of a priest, as Roman Catholics are expected to. She could not believe that they, even with the great Institution behind, could be absolutely right.

She would see other Churches. So she attended the Services of the Greek Church. Here there was not so much dogmatism. The priests were not so dictatorial. And the services were much more pure adoration and worship. The singing was marvellous and struck Vera to her depths. So did the prayers. And the whole atmosphere was intensely spiritual. She was greatly attracted to these services. The reverent adoration of the people was most inspiring. Here was true

worship. And at an Easter service she was struck by the adoration of the incarnate, crucified, and risen Christ, and was thrilled by the Easter joy of the congregation.

Here again, though, the congregation did not participate so fully as she would have liked. Too much was done by the priests. Too little by the people. So she next went to some churches where the congregation chose their own minister and there was far greater freedom. The services seemed dingy and gray in comparison with the rich and beautiful services of the Roman Catholic and Greek Churches. But there was hearty participation by the congregation. The minister really was a minister and not a priest. He was not far apart from them. He was more one of themselves whom they themselves had chosen to minister to their needs. And the simplicity of the service gave an impression of a more genuine and sincere and less artificial form of worship. And in this respect it made a deeper appeal to Vera than did the dazzling splendour and gorgeous ceremonial of the older Churches.

A still simpler form of service Vera had no opportunity of seeing. This was the meeting of a religious body founded in England by George Fox and called the Society of Friends. These had no minister at all and no form of service. They depended entirely upon being moved by the spirit. They would remain in silence until one or other *was* moved. Nor would they have any set prayers. Set prayers and rigid forms of service only deadened the spirit. Prayers to be effective must be spontaneous. The whole essence of this society was spontaneity. They were led by the Inward Light.

Great variety in the forms of worshipping God

Vera had seen. But she noticed that all did worship God, that all worshipped Christ as the supreme revelation of God, that all read the same Bible, and that all repeated the Lord's Prayer. All had faith in God and believed in love as of the very nature of God. There was this much in common amid all the diversity, and what they all had in common was the really fundamental and the vitally important. The differences did not seem to her nearly so serious as was made out. They concerned unessentials not fundamentals. She was surprised so much was made of them. And she was quite content to continue in that Church with which she had been familiar from her childhood.

But she did want to lead a *completely* religious life. This seemed to be the best way of keeping her vow to holiness. She was greatly attracted by what she read in the lives of saints, how they gave themselves up entirely to God. She would renounce the world and join some religious body. She would become a nun. It seemed the only life worth living—the only way of attaining true holiness, her great aim and object in life.

To become a nun would indeed mean severance from home. She would have to part with father and brothers and sisters and friends and all that had made life so dear to her. It would mean a terrific wrench. But had not Jesus himself said, Who will not leave father and mother and brother and sister and follow me is not worthy of me? And had not her wish almost from babyhood been to follow Jesus? Why then should she hesitate?

Yet hesitate she did. It was not the pain the severance from home would cause herself that held her back. It was the pain it would cause others, and

especially her father. The agony to herself would be excruciating. Still she would be proud to endure it for her dear Lord's sake. The suffering her leaving would cause others was what gave her pause.

And when at last she did bring herself to tell her father of her wish she was amazed to find how much greater than she had ever imagined was the pain her secluding herself in a convent would cause him. With all the gentleness she could command she broke the news to him and told him of her heart's desire. But when she had finished she could not have been more surprised if a rock had trembled before her. He seemed shaken to his foundations. She had no conception it would mean so much to him. He was literally trembling. He could scarcely speak. But tears that he could not restrain were coursing down his cheeks. He listened quietly to what she had to tell him. Perhaps he had expected something of the kind. Then he just begged her to say no more now. He would not stand in the way of her doing what was best for her in life. But he did not know how he could ever get on without her: she was everything to him. He could only just utter these few words, and then, not daring even to kiss her, but patting her tenderly on the shoulder, quietly leave the room lest he should break down altogether.

She was completely taken aback. She knew that he was fond of her. But these depths of affection were a revelation to her. And now, too, she found how much he was to her. Living always together neither in fact had known the strength of the tie between them. Only when there was prospect of its being severed did they realise how strong it was. How could she deliberately break it! How could she tear her heart in pieces—and his heart too! Her soul

writhed within her. It was being wrenched in two. She wanted with all her soul to follow Jesus. Yet how could she leave her father when it would break his heart?

She spoke no more to her father about it, but for days and weeks, and for long nights too, she pondered the whole matter over in her heart. She would consider her position afresh. What was her *main* object? What did she *really* want? Was becoming a nun her ultimate end? Or was it only a means? And if only a means, could not her real end be attained without breaking with her home? And then came the further thought—did Jesus himself entirely break with his home? Was he not always near by? And did he not see his mother from time to time?

She hesitated before coming to any final decision. She began to doubt whether there was any clear necessity—any divine call upon her—to desert her father who had done so much for her and who loved her so dearly. She might find some way of being loyal to Jesus without so grievously wounding her father. She might find some other way to God than through a convent. She would take time to think the matter over.

CHAPTER VI

HOLINESS

VERA pondered deeply over the new situation which had arisen. But in the midst of her pondering a fresh complication arose.

Through all this time of eager reaching forward to spiritual heights and of wracking inner conflicts she had been taking her full part in the ordinary social life of Holm. She was not a recluse. She had her secret inner life of the spirit. But she was not unsocial. She had many friends. And she enjoyed society. Music and dancing were her special delights in social life. And she was a perfect dancer, for she loved the rhythm of movement with the music. Nor was she so inhuman as to be indifferent to the admiration which she evoked. Her responsive nature could not help responding. And often great natural impulses would come surging up within her as she felt a man's admiration full upon her.

She had no thought of marrying. Latterly she had deliberately intended not to. But her capacity for love quick enough made itself known to a man. And more than one had yearned that that sweet love which she could lavish so abundantly should be given to him. For it is not beauty that most attracts men. It is love. They may admire beauty. But it is love that they really hunger and thirst for. It is love that they want to *marry*. And this kind of love that men would want to marry Vera had it in her to give in overflowing measure and of sweetest flavour. Any man could feel that.

Most willingly too would she have given it to all had it been possible. The trouble is it is *not* possible. Marrying love cannot be scattered like smiles upon everyone. To only *one* can it be given. And here was Vera's torture. She would have to make her choice. She would have to choose one; and, in her case, disappoint many. This is the cruelty in the love of man and woman; and she suffered greatly from it. She had to be cold towards—and on more than one occasion directly give pain to—the very people who were loving her. It was the cruellest position for *love* to put a woman in. And this was one further reason in her mind for seeking the seclusion of a convent—or anyhow for not marrying. She had not met the man whom she would prefer incontestably above all the others. And she did not suppose she ever would.

Yet this is precisely what she did. Just as she was in the midst of making up her mind upon whether to join a religious body and seclude herself in a convent or remain at home and find holiness in daily life, she met one who awakened in her something she had never known before.

This man was Loyal Love whom she met while on a visit. He was straight and true, and the kind of man if you had once trusted you would trust for ever. But he was a great deal more than staunch and steadfast. He had a peculiar power of evoking devotion in others. Those he trusted and who trusted him became devoted to him. And in his strong presence Vera felt that he had the capacity of concentrating his most sacred trust on *one* and in that one inspiring a devotion which no limits could bound.

She feared and shunned that presence; for instinct told her it would overcome her. Yet she was attracted to it, too. The instant he entered a room she could

feel it. She could feel, too, that power being concentrated on *her*. *She* was the one on whom all his best self was being focussed. And a great answering surge arose within her. To Loyal Love she *could* give herself. He was without question the one beyond and above every other to whom she could give her devotion. Of this there was no more doubt than that he desired her love.

What now was to be done? Once more she was in the torments of a fiery soul struggle. She could give her whole heart to Loyal Love. But, if she did, what would become of all her high resolutions? How could she *also* give all her heart to Jesus? How could she devote herself to seeking God and attaining holiness?

Again her soul was torn in twain, and she struggled hard to push this new devotion from her. But it kept returning with ever-increasing force. For Vera was a woman to the core. She loved to be loved. She knew that she was loved. And she knew that she was loved with a love worth having. And the woman within her would not be suppressed. It rose irresistibly in response.

She steadied herself with all her might and implored God to guide her. She directed her whole self towards the highest things, and then kept perfectly still and motionless and just *listened*. And in the quiet of her soul a voice said to her that their love for one another was Heaven-sent and should be the very means of leading them both to God. Such love could never stand in the way of her attaining holiness. If she wisely used it her love should be the instrument by which she would reach it.

She was now reassured. She could now see her way clear ahead. She would never give up her pursuit of holiness. That was in her blood and she could not

abandon it even if she would. But she would pursue it through married love and not in the cloister. So with cloudless radiancy she gave herself to him. All her golden self she gave to him and gave for ever. But on this sole condition that their wedded selves should be consecrated to the service of God. And no fleshly indulgence beyond what God needed for His own great purpose was to contaminate their souls. Their wedded love was to be a holy love.

This vow on their wedding day they both inwardly and solemnly confirmed in the presence of God.

It was a wrench to Vera's father to let her go from him. At least it had this to console him that she would not be so utterly cut off as she would have been in a convent. And she would be following the course of nature instead of going straight against it. So there would not be undue strain upon her; and he felt happier in his mind on that account. But his heart could scarcely let her go from him when the dread moment for "going away" arrived and she threw her arms round him and kissed him Goodbye. His dear treasure of so many years was leaving him. And he would be a lonely man without her sunny presence.

But happy days followed for Vera Love—supremely happy days of blissful union with one who was all tenderness as well as strength, and who was one with her in her own high ideal. In due course a boy and a girl were born. Their happiness seemed complete. And Vera had the amplest scope for all her love.

Then came sorrow upon sorrow, and she seemed felled to the ground just as she was reaching the sky. The country had become involved in that war of which I have already spoken. A call had been made upon the manhood of the nation. And Loyal Love

felt driven to answer it. Utterly devoted as he was to his wife and little children, loving them more than any other human beings whatever, he discovered, to his astonishment, that he loved his country more. That is to say, his country had to come before them. "Country first" some inward voice told him must be his motto. There was no question about it. And no hesitation. And what was stranger still was that he felt a positive joy and an exhilaration and exaltation he could never have imagined as he definitely responded to the call and his services were accepted by the powers that be.

And Vera never questioned the decision or sought to alter it. Upon her would fall the deadening strain of dull, long waiting. But she knew that her country must come before herself. She knew all she owed her country—all that had been done by the bravery of warriors, by the courage and wisdom of statesmen, by the prayers of the churches—and she would not have it otherwise than that her husband should give his services when needed. This was a sacrifice demanded of her by God as well as by her country. Tears were flowing freely in her heart but on her face was a brave smile as she said Goodbye to her husband. His last remembrance of her must be a happy one.

Agonies of suspense followed—long dreary days and weeks and months, when at any moment the worst news might come. The tide of war swayed to and fro. Sometimes there were successes. Sometimes there were terrible reverses. Always there was danger. In her quiet little village, where war seemed something belonging to an altogether different planet, far away in the abyss of space, she prayed her heart out to God.

And she prayed not for his *safety*—if he or she had wanted mere safety he would have stayed at home—but that he might give of his very best for his country and that she herself might by every means and by every word *help* him to give of his best. She prayed God help her to sustain and refresh his *spirit* and keep it firm and sure under the fearful shocks it had to sustain. And she not only prayed: she acted. She encouraged him in every letter and got her children in their own little ways to encourage him too. This was the part she had to play and, like every part she played, she played it to perfection. And in playing it she felt a satisfaction that nothing else could give.

Then came the blow—the blow that had hung over her for so long. It crashed down on her without a second's warning. Just the stark news by telegram that he had been killed in action.

She reeled and swayed for a moment, and was stunned and dazed. And by sheer excess of pain she was for a time so numbed as almost to be dead to it. Then the fountains broke loose and her grief gushed forth in uncontrollable floods. And where at first she had been hard she was now running over with all that was most sweetly tender.

Her dear children she would see, and her beloved father, but for the moment no one else. But she thought and thought of her husband. She thought again his deepest and most intimate thoughts. She felt again as he most deeply felt. His highest aspirations she now made hers. Above all, his love of country she made her love too. As he gave up all for his country so would she devote her whole life to Ouwonland. And the thrill—the holy, unspoken, and unspeakable joy that he felt when he made the

great decision she also now felt as she made her sacred resolution.

For her he was not dead: he was more alive than ever before. He was more *real* to her than when he was bodily present. He was nearer to her. He was *in* her. He was spirit of her spirit. All the surface, as it were, of him was now removed, and he was there in his bare essence. The essential man of him was present within her. She understood him now as she had never understood him before. She felt him now as never hitherto: he was concentrated to the finest point and had a penetrative power she had never before experienced. He entered into the very soul of her, and her soul was his soul.

And there in her soul she felt that same devoted love of country that he had felt—that longing for all the best for Ouwownland—that intense desire to be worthy of her—that fervent yearning that she too should be worthy of all the sacrifice her noblest sons were making for her. And now the sacred duty was upon Vera Love to fit *herself* to make Ouwownland worthy of the sacrifice Loyal Love had made for his country. She would feel him continuing his work through her. What she did he would be doing. They would still live and work together. And they together would live for evermore in Ouwownland. Their souls would be part of the soul of Ouwownland. They would be immortally bound together in their beloved country. And as their country would live for ever in the soul of Mankind so would they live on world without end.

Vera Love would ponder deeply over these thoughts, and over what she could do that would be best for Ouwownland—over what would be best of *all*. And the more she pondered on these things the more

did her thoughts turn to God. What Our ownland must be made must be more and more as God would have it be. It must be made in the image of God. The kingdom of Our ownland must be a true kingdom of God.

She would wander by herself on the downs as she thought over all this. She wanted to be alone with God. There in the large composure of Nature she would get what would calm her, and swift true thoughts which would guide her. She would throw her whole self out to God and then sit long and silent letting God flood into her.

Day after day she would spend thus. Then one day God *did* enter into her—and to the very full. It was a warm summer day. She was soothed with the beauty of the scene. Her soul felt pure and boundless as the blue sky above her. The glad song of the birds, the busy hum of the bees, and the sweet scent of the flowers joined with the soft air to waft away all trace of sorrow. And, of a sudden, she was suffused with a gladness no words can tell. Love was pouring into her till she had no strength to contain it. She was swept right out of herself and floated away to infinite distance and height. And yet in some marvellous way she was still herself. And the joy kept increasing till she was well-nigh beside herself. She would have cried out that no more might be given but that she was powerless to do or say a thing. The Holy Spirit of God was on her in all Its power, and she could only wait and endure.

Then, as the very limits of endurance had been reached, and when it seemed as if in one moment longer she would break asunder, the inrush of the spirit suddenly ceased, and she was left, not nerve-shattered as one would have thought, but with nerves

firmer than ever before and with a calmness of joy which she felt nothing could ever permanently disturb. And the love which had coursed through her seemed to have purged her of every iniquity and thoroughly washed her of her sins. It was a great *redeeming* love. At last she knew what holiness was.

For she had indeed experienced *holiness*. All the very highest she had ever known, or conceived, or imagined had been intensified to the utmost and fused into a single whole—all the majesty and glory of the world, all the wisdom and power, all the beauty and goodness and love, had been heated to the highest pitch of perfection and melted into one. And this final perfection was high above goodness. It was high above even love as we ordinarily know it, because there was beauty in it and power in it and wisdom in it; and all these joined together. There was love ineffable. There was beauty of transcendant loveliness. There was power beyond endurance. And there was wisdom which saw to the very essence of things. And all these in one—completeness, perfection, wholeness. This was holiness and nothing else. She had often read of holiness and heard of it and spoken of it and striven for it. Now she knew what it really *meant*. It was something awe-full and tremendous. But it was something sweet and tender too, and with a power of attraction beyond all belief.

As she walked home she not only felt lighter than air; the air itself seemed golden. Everyone she met she could see through and through till the love in the heart of each was revealed as clear as the sun. And beauty she saw in the lowliest thing. Nothing was mean in her eyes. All went to make up a world that was glowing with beauty because of the great love at its heart.

For weeks she continued in this state of high exaltation—every faculty heightened, every nerve tense. She was as different from her former self as a flesh and blood human being is from a marble statue. She was melting and running over. She was a liquid flame. She would quiver in response to the faintest breath, yet never cease from pointing upward. And she would give forth a soft sweet many-coloured radiancy which attracted every one to her and lit up the loveliest lights in all it reached.

But she was by no means content with only shining. She longed for the tongue of men and of angels that she might proclaim her glad tidings to the whole world. She had not yet the flaming tongue which would speak to every single soul. But she had the message and she would train herself to deliver it. And she would give her message to those who did have the tongue to declare it.

Her vocation was now clear. As Loyal Love had died for his country so would she now live for it. She would see to it that he had not died in vain. She would fill the whole country with that love of God which she had known. All that devoted nuns did for the service of God in the seclusion of a convent she would do in the midst of life. In the midst of life she had found God. And now she would dedicate herself to God as much in life as she might have in a convent. She would show forth the beauty of holiness. She would make Ouwonland a Holy land.

firmer than ever before and with a calmness of joy which she felt nothing could ever permanently disturb. And the love which had coursed through her seemed to have purged her of every iniquity and thoroughly washed her of her sins. It was a great *redeeming* love. At last she knew what holiness was.

For she had indeed experienced *holiness*. All the very highest she had ever known, or conceived, or imagined had been intensified to the utmost and fused into a single whole—all the majesty and glory of the world, all the wisdom and power, all the beauty and goodness and love, had been heated to the highest pitch of perfection and melted into one. And this final perfection was high above goodness. It was high above even love as we ordinarily know it, because there was beauty in it and power in it and wisdom in it; and all these joined together. There was love ineffable. There was beauty of transcendant loveliness. There was power beyond endurance. And there was wisdom which saw to the very essence of things. And all these in one—completeness, perfection, wholeness. This was holiness and nothing else. She had often read of holiness and heard of it and spoken of it and striven for it. Now she knew what it really *meant*. It was something awe-full and tremendous. But it was something sweet and tender too, and with a power of attraction beyond all belief.

As she walked home she not only felt lighter than air; the air itself seemed golden. Everyone she met she could see through and through till the love in the heart of each was revealed as clear as the sun. And beauty she saw in the lowliest thing. Nothing was mean in her eyes. All went to make up a world that was glowing with beauty because of the great love at its heart.

For weeks she continued in this state of high exaltation—every faculty heightened, every nerve tense. She was as different from her former self as a flesh and blood human being is from a marble statue. She was melting and running over. She was a liquid flame. She would quiver in response to the faintest breath, yet never cease from pointing upward. And she would give forth a soft sweet many-coloured radiancy which attracted every one to her and lit up the loveliest lights in all it reached.

But she was by no means content with only shining. She longed for the tongue of men and of angels that she might proclaim her glad tidings to the whole world. She had not yet the flaming tongue which would speak to every single soul. But she had the message and she would train herself to deliver it. And she would give her message to those who did have the tongue to declare it.

Her vocation was now clear. As Loyal Love had died for his country so would she now live for it. She would see to it that he had not died in vain. She would fill the whole country with that love of God which she had known. All that devoted nuns did for the service of God in the seclusion of a convent she would do in the midst of life. In the midst of life she had found God. And now she would dedicate herself to God as much in life as she might have in a convent. She would show forth the beauty of holiness. She would make Ouwonland a Holy land.

CHAPTER VII

FAITH

THIS was Vera Love's state of mind when Golden Promyss came to seek from her some guidance for his future. He was still on the plains. He had successfully avoided all temptations to remain on the level. He had trained himself for an ascent. And he had fitted himself to see the beauty from the mountain crest when he reached it. But he was not sure which was the right mountain to climb. And he hoped that Vera Love would both point the way and strengthen him for the enterprise.

He had set his heart on doing something for his country's good—for her highest good—her *spiritual* good. And he had prepared himself for the task. But he had not yet found the actual work into which he could set his teeth. That is what he now sought.

He could not have come to Vera Love at a more opportune moment. She was longing to find some means by which she could carry out the resolution she had made. She could not bring herself to speak to Golden Promyss of the experience she had had. It was something far too sacred to talk about to anyone though she was longing to declare the message it contained to the whole world. But she had written out an account of it which after much hesitation she gave to him when he came to her. And she invited him to read it over very carefully and think out how she and he could best work together to achieve their common aim. They both wanted to *quicken the spiritual life* of their country. They must now work out a definite

plan for that purpose. And she would work with him and support him in everything he did which would conduce to that end.

He took her written account away with him and read it over and over again till he had thoroughly grasped its full significance and import. He realised that this was a case of baptism with the Holy Ghost and with fire. This was the working of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, Who Jesus had foretold would come to his followers. It was what Roman Catholics call the Spiritual Marriage and had been experienced by many saints. It was an experience similar to what others who are not orthodox Christians or nominal Christians at all but who are devoted to the things of God have also had. It was an expansion and deepening and heightening of the ordinary consciousness till it had become a consciousness of the whole universe. The "I" of the individual consciousness had become for the moment identical with the "I" of the entire universe. "My Father and I are one." It was a consciousness which more and more persons would experience as the race progressed.

This was the conclusion Golden Promyss came to as he read Vera Love's description and he saw in her experience the consummation of all his own desires. What he had himself so earnestly prayed for she had actually experienced. She had known God face to face. She had seen what true holiness meant. She had had a vision of the kingdom of God. And with all the fervency of his quick nature he now threw himself into the task of bringing that vision into effect.

He turned the matter over and over again in his mind, and tried to size up the situation in his country as it really was. From a spiritual point of view she was evidently still only in a state of barbarism.

Religion was not yet bone of her bone and flesh of her flesh. It was only a smear on the surface. And this was because the people had not a religion of *their own*. They had Christianity, but it was not their own Christianity. It was a Christianity which had come to them in a foreign garb and which they had never really taken to. He believed that the religion of his country must always be Christianity. But he could see that the people must have a truer view of it than they had at present. And they would never have a view that was true to *them*, and that they could work on in their lives, until they had formed that view for *themselves*. Taking it cut and dried, trimmed and set, on authority was not enough. That might be sufficient and necessary in childhood. But the people were now grown up. And like all adults they were disposed to be sceptical about what was taught on authority. It might or might not be true. They must test the truth for themselves, and, in any case, prove the authority on which it was asserted.

So the vision which began to form in the mind of Golden Promyss was of the people coming together of themselves to discuss religion in general and Christianity in particular, and to find means and to find their own way of making the truth and beauty of Christianity better known and appreciated than it was at present.

The spiritual education of the people was now mostly in the hands of the clergy, and the chief means they employed were Church services. But they had only to look about them at Holm to see that for the majority these Church services did not fulfil their purpose. They were very beautiful and very satisfying to a *few*. But quite clearly they did not make effective appeal to the general mass of the people. Something

more, and something other, was required if the heart of the people was to be really touched. To some these Services were the source of the greatest consolation and delight. To most they had long lost the freshness they may have had centuries ago. The life had gone out of them, and they were impoverished and dry.

They were meant to kindle faith in God and awaken and strengthen men's love for Him. The people were to come together and draw nigh unto God. In these Services their minds were to be kept set on holy things. And the priests were to minister to the religious thoughts and feelings of men. And so the priests did—and most zealously. Yet evidently something more was needed to revive the living force, the fire and vitality, the freshness and spontaneity of the Early Christian Church. The kingdom of God was not presented to the people in the right way. What might have suited the people of Italy did not do for the people of Ourownland. And what might have done for the people of Ourownland several centuries ago did not do for them in the present time.

In desiring a better way of presenting the kingdom of God, Golden Promyss was only expressing something deeply felt in the heart of the people. This he was sure of. The Church was the house of God, the place of common worship for the whole community. But before the whole community could worship with their whole hearts they must be clear as to the object of their worship and as to its worth. Worship is worthship. And the people were by no means clear on the worth of what they were expected to worship, though in their hearts they were craving to know more and to see more clearly. Means must be found of putting the worth of the kingdom of God before their eyes.

This was how Golden Promyss saw the situation. But he and Vera Love decided that they would not proceed to any action until they had secured the support of Faith. Without it they could do little. With it they could do anything. For Faith had great influence with the people at Holm. He came of the people, and knew them well, and trusted them, and believed in them. He had also a sturdy conviction of the essential goodness of things, and because of his trustfulness people trusted him.

All his life he had lived in the open air, in the fields, with horses and dogs, sheep and cattle. And his forbears had before him. He was of the very earth and air, the wet and sunshine of Ouwownland. And he was well accustomed to take the rough with the smooth in life, and the hard with the soft. If anything he preferred the rough and the hard. They toned him up to the pitch he liked to be at.

And it was from this outdoor life—this perpetual contact with nature, and with animals as well as with men—that he had acquired his unshakeable belief in the essential goodness of things. There might be bad years, storms, floods, frosts, insect pests, diseases. But taking one year with another, the good with the bad and the bad with the good, there was a great deal to be thankful for. There were the great facts to which we have grown accustomed but which ought to impress us more deeply than they do that sowing seed in spring time does result in harvest in the autumn, that cattle and sheep do bring forth young, that winter is followed by spring and that with the spring come primroses and violets and the song of birds and beauties unmeasured. He had also, as a young man, to go up on the downs before dawn to look after the sheep and had been impressed by the steadfastness

and stillness and calm of the stars. In many a way he had felt the presence of God.

And like his family for generations he had been a regular church-goer. He had heard much talk in modern times about there being no God. And as a young man he had often been scoffed at for going to Church. He used to be asked if he had ever seen God. And he used to reply that he could see God just as plainly as he could see his own father. He could only see the outward form of his father but that outward form revealed his real father behind it. And in the world about him he could only see the outward form of God. But that outward form revealed the real God behind it. And he went to Church to do reverence to that God and to worship Him. Anyone who denied there was a Power working for good in the world could have seen very little of the world and he pitied him. His own belief in God was immovable. The most vital element in his make up was a rooted conviction that goodness governed the world. On this he took his stand and nothing could ever shake him.

This was the kind of man Faith was, and Promyss thought he would have his talk with him in Faith's own element—out in the fields. He found him watching his crops being carried in. There had been much rain and it was a bad harvest. They got talking about the Harvest Thanksgiving Service and how some thought there was little to be thankful for in the present year. But Faith maintained that we must expect the bad with the good. He had not got as much this year as he had hoped for. The wonder was, though, that they got anything at all. Whether they got much or little there was plenty to be thankful for in getting dozens of grains of corn for every one grain that you put in the ground. He would be a poor

creature who would not go to Church to thank God for that.

Why was it then that so few out of the whole population of Holm did go to Church, asked Promyss. Was it something wrong with the Church services or with the people?

Faith would not allow that there was anything radically wrong with the people at Holm. He said they were careless about religion. But they were at bottom a clean, wholesome, healthy-minded lot and had just as much goodness as any; and if religion were presented to them in a proper way they would be as religious as anyone could wish. He would trust them any day. He would trust Vicker too. He worked hard for the good of Holm and people were not half as grateful as they should be for what he did for them. For all that he did not think that religion was put to the people in the proper way. If it were people would rush to Church as they rush to games or entertainments.

"They do not half see the value of it," said Faith. "The way I look at it is this. If a man has a new kind of wheat, or a new variety of potato, or a new breed of fowls he takes a deal of trouble to show us farmers what are its good points, and we buy some and test them and if several of us find they really are good then there is a general rush to obtain them. And I say it is the same with religion. It must be presented properly so that people can easily see its value. Then they will take it and test it. And if those who have tested it and proved its value in practical life were then to present it to others there would soon be a stampede for it. The people think that Vicker is tied down and bound to say certain things, so what he says does not carry the weight it ought to. He is

like the salesman with the new variety. But if an independent witness who had tried religion and found it good could get up and testify then men would listen. Speaking from practical experience, and speaking with conviction he would easily touch men's hearts, and men, instead of being indifferent to religion, would rush for it."

This was Faith's view. And when Promyss asked for his support in some scheme which Vera Love and he would work out in which those who had experience of the value of religion could join together to help those who had not he readily consented. He had great confidence in Promyss and believed in his future and he would enjoy giving him help. And Promyss on his part, felt greatly strengthened by the encouragement which Faith had now given him.

Inspired by Vera Love and supported by Faith he felt he could do anything.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SCHEME

It was now Grace's turn to take up the tale. Promyss had of course kept her informed of his talks with Vera Love and Faith, and had discussed with her what should be done. And she had been struck by what Faith had said about the way in which a new type of wheat, or a new model of an agricultural machine was made known among farmers. It suggested an idea to her.

She was herself a very fair actor, and she was naturally disposed to put an idea into an art form. Her first inclination always was to see how art could be used to express what was in people's heads and hearts.

As Golden Promyss told her of his aims and his talks she kept turning over in her mind how art could be most effectively employed to carry out his purpose. Art might be offended at being looked on as only a means to an end and not as an end in itself. That did not trouble her. Art for art's sake *alone* was not her creed. She loved all beautiful things for their beauty. None-the-less, she had seen poetry, architecture, the drama and other arts used for the specific purpose of conveying a particular idea to the minds of the people. And she would do the same now.

The problem as she saw it was this:—The ultimate object of the Church had always been to preach the Gospel—to spread the Good News—so as to raise the spiritual life of humanity. But in this the Church had been only partially successful. Most people had a very

imperfect idea of the Gospel or what was meant by the kingdom of God. What was wanted was some better means of bringing the Gospel home to the general mass of the people.

Golden Promyss had the idea of collecting together a few of those people who had heard the Good News and tested it in practical life, as a farmer tests new seeds, and found it of supreme value, and then getting them to present the kingdom of God in such a way as would readily appeal to the ordinary run of persons who were not in the habit of going to Church. The question was how and by whom should the kingdom of God be presented so as to reach these people. They had to be attracted. They could not be forced. How could they best be attracted?

Grace gave the answer. She urged that everyone loves a play. Children love a play. Grown-ups like a play. Play-acting is a natural human instinct. For any good play there is always a rush. Even the village amateur performances are crowded. And people should be attracted to hear about the kingdom of God by having it presented to them in the form of a play. This was Grace's idea.

Acting the Gospel would help people to understand it, and, understanding it, to remember it and build their lives upon it. Sacred plays were more likely to move the generality of men than the ordinary Church services.

The more Golden Promyss thought over Grace's idea the more it appealed to him. It seemed to him the solution of the whole difficulty. And he took Grace forthwith to Vera Love and Faith to discuss the position in all its bearings with them.

Their main object, he urged, was to add to the spiritual health, welfare, and prosperity of the people.

And in sacred drama they had a magnificent instrument for putting the Gospel message in such a precise and intelligent and moving way that it would reach the minds and hearts and souls of the great mass of the people. Men could say in a sacred drama high spiritual things that they could say neither in ritual nor in sermons. Men wanted an answer to the ultimate questionings and drama was the best means of giving that answer because in it different types of persons could be represented and their opposing ideals and points of view finally harmonised. Characters could be depicted struggling against evil influences. The struggles of conflicting loyalties and especially of the higher good against the lower could be represented. The emotions could be purified through the pity and fear of great tragedy. By presenting the highest ideals men could be led to God and helped to worship the Source and End of all perfection. Their faith could be confirmed in the essential goodness of the Power behind the universe—in a master-purpose on the side of right.

The story of the life of Christ lent itself peculiarly for dramatisation. It was the most dramatic story in the whole world's history—and it was the more dramatic because it was the story of the conflict not of good against evil but of a higher good against the lower. The men who did Jesus to death were not bad men but good men: they honestly believed that Jesus was doing harm to the Jewish nation and that for the good of the Jewish nation he must die. It was the drama of the everlasting conflict of the good with the better, and of the higher good with the lower good. And it concluded with the resurrection and ultimate triumph of the higher good. The kingdom of God was seen in the end to prevail.

A story more suited for a sacred drama could not be imagined. The Church used in olden days to perform plays. And all drama in fact originated in religion. The time had come round again when the art of drama should be used in the service of religion.

This is what Golden Promyss urged. And his first suggestion was that they should go to Towne and get up a little company of players who would go about the country performing sacred plays, using the drama as a means of disseminating religious ideas.

But against this Vera Love strongly protested, for several reasons. The kingdom of God, if it was to be presented at all, must be presented in a convincing, a becoming, and a reverential way and therefore by persons who really and deeply believed in its worth. Such persons could be found in Towne, no doubt. But they could be more certain of finding them here at Holm where they knew everyone and about everyone. They might not be such good actors as could be found in Towne. But she could be more sure of their having their souls in the acting.

Besides, here at Holm they would be more able to follow up the *effects* of the presentation of a play. The presentation was not an end itself: it was only a means. The end was the quickening of the life of the people—livening the people—intensifying their spiritual life. That could be done better by quiet intensive work over a long period in one place where they knew and were known by all than by crusading round the country generally. Here at Holm their influence would be concentrated and effective. And by their work here in a quite ordinary place they would show what could be done anywhere. From a concrete example of what could be done in one place people elsewhere would be heartened to go and do likewise.

Their methods should be intensive not expansive. But their influence would extend in proportion to its intensity.

Grace was not very certain of the wisdom of this procedure. She had in her mind a high standard of artistic perfection. She could not brook the idea of any representation being made which would be the slightest fraction short of that standard. The play must be a thing of beauty ; otherwise it would not go home to the hearts of the people. But a thing of beauty was not easy to create. Could they expect to find in a village like Holm people who could create a thing of real beauty ? They might find devout persons in plenty. Would they be able to find efficient actors ? Could they get together a company of actors who would be capable of giving a presentation of the Gospel message which would really appeal ?

Faith had no doubt at all. Most certainly they could. Grace herself, to start with, was excellent, and in a matter of this kind would excel herself. Vera Love too had her heart so thoroughly in it she would unquestionably inspire others to act to the top of their form. So would Golden Promyss. Then there was the Amateur Dramatic Society which gave excellent performances of ordinary plays and drew crowded houses. There was the Musical Society too. There was lots of talent in the place for them to draw on. And the people were quite accustomed to getting up their own entertainments. They were becoming increasingly cultured too, what with the general education, and the library, and all the facilities for recreations in the factory. There was no reason why they should not perform a sacred play just as well as they performed a secular play. And when such good performances were got up merely for amusement and entertainment

how much better presentations would they make when they were acting for a great cause and with their whole souls in the acting? The villagers of Oberammergau acted a sacred play so why should not they at Holm? If they wanted expert advice in matters of technique they could always get down someone from Towne.

There was plenty of good stuff in the people at Holm. And if Vera Love, Grace and Promyss were so dead set on producing sacred plays in order to strengthen the religious spirit of the place he was confident the thing could be done. They would work wonders. They would kindle such enthusiasm in the actors that they would be able to perform far beyond their ordinary capacity. It would be a great experiment, but he had the fullest confidence in its success.

Grace felt reassured by Faith but suggested that they should begin in a small way with tableaux and Nativity plays till they had found their feet. Then they could work on to more ambitious projects. They would gradually build up a little company of actors who would make representations of the kingdom of God to bring the Gospel message home to the people—a company of “fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God.”

To this Vera Love wished to add music. Members of the Musical Society who cared for spiritual things might join them and they might get up concerts of sacred music and community singing. Most people liked to sing and would be glad of opportunity of being made to sing. And through instrumental and vocal music they might do much to awaken that sense of holiness she was so anxious to impress.

Golden Promyss then raised another point. People like to *discuss* religious beliefs. When dogmas are

authoritatively laid down men are bound to question them. They want to know the reasons for them. Especially is this the case when the dogmas are to affect the conduct of their whole lives. And men with any sense of wonder at the marvels and mysteries of the world to which they belong want to know what the world really *is*. They want to know how it is governed, and whether it is governed for good, and what reasons we have for thinking it is so.

In Church there is no opportunity for discussion. But if people could hear these ultimate questions about the nature of the world and the nature of God, and the nature of our relation to God and what should be our aim in life, freely and frankly discussed, and if they were afforded opportunities and given encouragement, to take part in the discussion themselves, they would believe with a far greater strength of conviction. And they would see points more clearly when they were argued out than when they were declared dogmatically from the pulpit. So some means should be found for providing opportunities for the discussion of fundamental religious beliefs. Meetings for the frank discussion of religious problems should be arranged.

Faith cordially supported Promyss. Merely repeating, like a parrot, creeds laid down by authority meant nothing effective. But a belief laid hold of by a man for himself—laid hold of after he had heard the grounds for holding thoroughly discussed—would deeply affect his life. And he was confident that Christianity had nothing to fear and everything to gain from the freest possible discussion of fundamental religious belief. He was sure people would *like* the discussion. And he had sufficient confidence in the good sense of the people at Holm to be certain that

through free discussion they would find their way to a purer and stronger Christianity.

Vera Love and Grace also agreed that meetings should be arranged for discussion. All they stipulated was that the discussions should be carried on with a good temper and ready courtesy and with the single object of arriving at the truth. Argumentation merely for the sake of arguing led nowhere—or led downwards. Discussion to remove misconceptions and to clear the way to right conceptions of the world would lead to God.

They now knew well what was in each other's minds and that they were of one mind and one heart and agreed upon a common course of action. And they then and there formed themselves into the nucleus of a little society for carrying out their purpose.

Put briefly, that purpose was to get a few others of the same way of thinking as themselves to join with them and work for the finer spirituality of Holm. They would aim at increasing true religion in the hearts of men, so that they might have strength in the battle of life and sweetness and grace in all human relations.

And they would do this principally by making the life and teaching and nature of Jesus better known through representations in tableaux and sacred plays. Music as well as drama they would use to reach the souls of men. And their minds they would reach by means of meetings at which papers would be read and discussions take place on the nature of the world and of the Power which controls and directs it and of our relations to the world and that Power, and such like ultimate questions affecting the very foundations of our life.

Every type of person ought thus to be reached.

Those who prefer to take their religion on authority and have their religious belief definitely laid down for them would find what they want in the Churches. Those who are more readily influenced by art should be able to get what would satisfy them in the dramatic and musical performances. And those who require intellectual satisfaction should find it in the philosophical discussions. And most people would probably attend all three, finding in each a reinforcement of the other.

In this way they would hope to give the people of Holm a true vision of the kingdom of God, make them realise its value, and stir them to bring it about themselves. And they would hope that the example of what was being done at Holm would be an incentive to other towns and villages to go and do the same till the whole country was filled with the vision and a sense of its value.

Their aim was high and there would be much plodding through narrow gorges and over low foothills before the heights could be reached. But their main objective was now clear in their mind. Their sense of direction would guide them. Each step would be in the direction of the ultimate height. And there would be neither going back nor faltering by the way.

They were fully aware that if the kingdom of God is of value yet the price has to be paid. It has to be won. It cannot be had for nothing. It must be bought with iron sacrifice, strict training, and stern discipline. But they were willing to pay the price. And they were confident that in the end they would obtain full value, pressed down and running over.

This was the general plan which they formed for spiritualising Holm. And I heard about it soon after

it was formed. Golden Promyss told me about it. The whole scheme was thoroughly characteristic of the people of Ourownland. Stubborn and independent, they will never stand dictation. At the slightest suspicion they revolt. Yet they are not disorderly. They are a most law-abiding people. Only they must make the laws themselves. Their own laws they will keep. And also see that they are kept: for they have no notion of making laws which are not meant to be kept.

And in their religion it is the same as in their politics or their games—of both of which they are very fond. They are at heart a deeply religious people. And Golden Promyss is typical of what is in their heart. But for centuries they had been in spiritual subjection to a foreign people. And even after they had gained some measure of spiritual freedom they had to suffer from having the laws of their religious life laid down for them. Even now they have not achieved their full spiritual freedom. Their Church still retains the old foreign habit of dictation. It lays down a kind of code of spiritual law which it expects the people to abide by. The people themselves have not laid down their own spiritual laws. They have simply taken over, with a few alterations, what was laid down by foreigners. Consequently, the people have never whole-heartedly accepted this spiritual code and abided by it. They have not yet acquired their full spiritual freedom.

Ourownland owed an immense debt to these foreign missionaries who had brought Christianity to the land, built the Churches and preached the Gospel. But there was the fact that the simple Good News of Jesus had not come straight from Palestine. It had come to Ourownland, as to many other countries,

from Rome. It had a Latin impress deep upon it before it arrived. It was told in a high commanding tone and with threatening gestures. The people could not listen quietly to it and let it sink naturally into their souls. *How* they should respond to it was authoritatively laid down for them.

This went directly against the grain of the people of Ouwonland. They are not a Latin people. They resent anyone laying down the law for them. They like to lay down the law for themselves. They like to take in the Gospel of Christ in their own way. The present church service, though it was drawn up by their own clergy, was drawn up in a time of great disturbance when they had but just thrown off the yoke of the Pope and before they had learnt to govern themselves in spiritual matters. It was drawn up, too, at a time when the mass of the laity were ill-educated and little accustomed to think spiritual matters out for themselves and could take no part in formulating the services.

In any event, Christianity was not a spontaneous offspring of Ouwonland as Hinduism was of India. It was not a religion which had sprung up naturally from the soul of the people. It was a foreign importation—not the free-flowing product of the people. And when, in addition, it came encased in set Creeds and Articles and forms I was not surprised that the people of Ouwonland did not really take it to their hearts.

It was beyond their spiritual digestion. Yet they were suffering from spiritual hunger. And there was that in Christianity which would satisfy their hunger. And I fancied I saw in this movement of Golden Promyss a reaching out towards a Christianity more suited to the appetite of Ouwonland.

They would have Christianity. All the world must have it in the end. But they were not going to be dictated to as to the form in which they would have it. They would make their own form. That is what my Endsight showed me was happening.

CHAPTER IX

LYTE AND HOPE

PROMYSS had a definite purpose in his mind and had formed the nucleus of a band of workers for carrying it out. Now they had to forecast the kind of opposition they were likely to meet with so that they might recruit the necessary forces to overcome it.

The most obvious, though not the most dangerous, opposition would come from Blak Enmytie. He would fight them tooth and nail. As an atheist he was diametrically opposed to their way of thinking. He was an exponent of that crass materialism which is so wide-spread over the world. To him the only things that mattered were the material things of life—enough food to eat, decent clothes to wear, and a proper house to live in. Spiritual things were so much bunkum. And religion did positive harm to the people by sapping their wills, making them weak and submissive, and destroying their initiative and determination to help themselves. In the interests of the people he, therefore, opposed religion. He opposed the Churches. And he would certainly oppose Golden Promyss and his friends.

Then, not so active but perhaps more effective, was the blighting influence of Dedlie Indifference. He had an extraordinarily discouraging effect on those who came in contact with him, and his influence was very contagious. Any kind of spiritual enthusiasm shrivelled in his presence.

Sekuler Kulcher was another who would draw people away. He was a highly successful man of busi-

ness who placed great faith in science. Science had plain, tangible results to show, and he had profited much by them in his business. He was a prosperous man in consequence. The proof of the pudding was in the eating. He could not see that he would have been anything like so well off if he had followed religion instead of science. And seeing his success many were inclined to agree with him.

From these three and their followers opposition would certainly come. But the most serious opposition would come from quite a different quarter. The greatest enemy of the better is the good. It would be the good people who would be the most serious opponents—as they were of Christ. Vicker himself would not oppose. He had gone through too much trouble and was too broadminded. But the more conservative church-goers most assuredly would. They would think the ark of the covenant was being threatened and would be up in arms at once. They of all others Golden Promys would have to reckon with—and not because they were bad but because they were good.

Recognising the position the little nucleus decided to increase their membership before they proceeded to form a society. They would add an outer ring to the nucleus. They would get Clere Lyte, Fayrer Hope and Frank Kritik to join them.

They wanted Clere Lyte to guide them. A university man, and with more of that universal outlook which university men ought to but seldom have, he was interested in philosophy, and distinguished for the clarity and precision of his thought. Exactness and accuracy and method were his chief characteristics, and served to make him a valuable manager of the bank. Perhaps he was not conventionally ortho-

dox in his religion. Nevertheless, he was not an irreligious man. At bottom, indeed, he was deeply religious. For his thought had convinced him that the world had a spiritual basis and a spiritual goal, and he, as a component member of the world, must have the same.

He was not deficient in emotional power. But he rather distrusted his emotions. What he prided himself on was keeping his intellect at the finest pitch of efficiency. He would detect the slightest flaw in an argument. And he would unerringly discriminate between true sentiment and false. In religious writing and speaking there is often much woolly thought and mawkish sentiment. He would pierce both with a telling phrase and expose the false in all its naked shame.

This was the kind of man Clere Lyte was. And the "nucleus" as they now called themselves, hoped that if they could secure him he would be a sure guide in their activities. They had to seek the Lord, if haply they might find Him. And Lyte would help them to clarify their conceptions of God and to form sound religious beliefs for themselves.

He would not have the passion and driving force and wide warm sympathies of Vera Love, or the finish and attraction of Grace, but he would be most valuable in keeping them on the right way. They could trust to him to preserve them from error, and from wandering off in wrong directions.

Clere Lyte had had his eye on Golden Promyss and readily agreed to join the little band. He said he was often maddened at the atrocities which the official exponents of religion expected sane men to believe. They jarred horribly on the sense of truth which was so vivid within him. And he would gladly join with

Promyss and his friends in removing misconceptions of the world and its government and in working forward to a truer view. He would make only one condition—that they were to follow truth wherever it led them. If authority forced them in one direction and truth pointed in another they must follow truth and not authority. If Lyte can be said to have had a passion for anything it was a passion for truth; and he was convinced that truth could never lead to anything but the good.

Promyss quite agreed but represented that the difficulty was to know what was the truth. It was easy to say they should follow the truth but who could determine what it exactly was?

Clere Lyte acknowledged the difficulty and said that they could only reach it by hard—*very* hard thinking and by free discussion where one view would have to hold its own against the fullest criticism of others. They must allow of scepticism about the most fundamental things. They must prove all things.

Promyss said that this was exactly what they proposed to do. They would like to hold meetings at which even the existence of God or the Divinity of Christ could be discussed. Some persons were so constituted that they *preferred* to take their beliefs on authority and to have their creeds laid down for them. Others there were who could not hold a fundamental belief with any tenacity unless they had formed it for themselves. And it was for these latter that the society wished to cater.

All discussion would have to be conducted with that reverence which is due to truth. And fellow-searchers after truth would have to preserve all proper courtesy to one another. But within these bounds the greatest

latitude would be allowed. The nature of the world, the existence of God, the nature of God, the nature of Christ, the value of Christ's teaching, the goal of human efforts—all such subjects should be discussed.

Clere Lyte saw great scope here for him. He had often felt constrained to get up and declare the truth that was in him. And here would be a chance. He told Promyss that his services would be entirely at his disposal.

Now Hope had to be approached, and Faith had undertaken to do this. Golden Promyss always regarded him as a man after his own heart—the very man for an enterprise such as they were now embarking on. He was just the man to see a thing through once he had taken it up. He and Faith had been associated in many an enterprise. The one seemed to supplement the other. And as long as Hope was in a venture Faith could trust it to succeed.

Not that Hope had not had his downs as well as his ups. He had gone through a stern schooling. He was a builder by trade and had suffered many strokes of adversity—bad debts, increased prices of material, strikes among the workers, and so on. At first everything had seemed to go against him. But the severest blows would never make him despair. What he was aiming at might be far off and difficult of attainment. But he would persevere on and largely because of the trust in himself which Faith had early instilled he had a way of arriving in the end.

Yet Hope was no easy-going, amiable optimist. He did not merely sit with folded hands expecting things of their own accord to turn out as he wanted. Nor did he just trust to chance that they would eventuate well. He knew he had to work to make them succeed. Faith had long ago convinced him that if you worked

well at whatever you were at good would inevitably come out of it in the long run. So in spite of all setbacks, and reverses, and disappointments, he worked cheerily on. And his irrepressible cheerfulness cheered others. Everyone liked to work with Hope. His father had been a carpenter. But as a boy he had received a helping hand from Faith. He had first studied in an architect's office and then set up as a builder in a small way. With Faith's aid he had set himself to build homes for the people. His aim was to build well and true. His houses were to be suited to their purpose and fitted to their surroundings. They would then be things of beauty, a joy to look at and a delight to live in. Another ambition was to have all his workmen interested in their job and therefore taking a pride in their work. And as long as he built buildings which were a pleasure to look at, as well as to live in, and a pleasure to live in as well as to look at; and as long as he had workmen whom it was a pleasure to work with he did not trouble about making money for its own sake. He had to build houses that would pay for the cost of building. For he had to make his own living, and could not afford to build for nothing. But making a fortune was not his main aim. He built for the love of building. He loved to help in providing serviceable and beautiful homes for the people. And the joy of doing that was the main reward he looked for.

In the result, however, he was much in demand. Because of the excellence of his building everyone wanted him. His business grew. It extended to the villages round. And he was now a man of considerable means and position.

But he was also a man of vision. He had long views and great breadth of outlook. He built for the present.

But he built also for the future. And he would not sacrifice either the present for the future or the future for the present.

Owing so much as he did to Faith, Hope would therefore be inclined to any proposal Faith made. But Faith had to put the scheme clearly before him because he wanted not only the acquiescence of Hope but his whole-hearted support. And what Faith strongly insisted on was the enthusiasm which Vera Love and Grace were putting into it. He acknowledged that the scheme in itself was not very promising. In feeble, inefficient hands it might prove a fiasco. But, with the keenness and devotion which Vera Love and Grace were prepared to put into it, Faith said it was bound to succeed. They meant to instil more spirituality into the place—to give the people a finer spiritual outlook. And Faith was convinced that they had the capacity to do this.

Hope had long known Vera Love. He knew what a way she had with her and how difficult it was to resist her when she had set her heart on a thing. And if she had Faith to support her he was ready enough to go in with her. He was working in his own way for the good of the place, and liked to put his best into all he did trusting it would leave its mark for good upon Holm. Their scheme seemed to work in with his own line. They would have to make up their minds from the start for rebuffs and crosses, chills and derisions. But they would be engaged in something worth working for. In working for the spiritual good of Holm they would be working for something which was bound to come about in the end. Failures they might have, but even failures would only help to secure the eventual triumph. So he would gladly agree to work with Faith and Vera Love.

Now Frank Kritik had to be enlisted. They particularly wanted him because of his outspokenness. He would have no compunction about telling them of their faults and deficiencies and inadequacies in the most uncompromising language. Yet he could be trusted to criticise in no merely destructive way so as only to cause irritation and arouse hostility. For he was a man who had in his own mind a high standard of perfection by which he judged men and their actions. He could appreciate the good as well as denounce the bad. His only object in denouncing the bad was to ensure the good. And, if he might appear to be more prone to denunciation than to appreciation, people could feel that he had a high standard in his mind which he wanted to see realised so that those who were striving after it were always grateful to him for ruthlessly exposing their defects. Home truths might not always be palatable but Vera Love and Promyss felt that they would be highly useful in moulding their young society.

And Frank Kritik gave them a taste of his quality in his first talk with them. He told them straight that it was fairly presumptuous on their part to suppose that they with their amateur, immature efforts would be able to do what the Churches had not been able to accomplish after centuries of effort. The Churches had specially trained ministers, a mighty organisation behind them, unrivalled experience and an established position and prestige. In comparison with all this Promyss and his friends had only bare enthusiasm. Frank Kritik admired their audacity. He was not so sure of their wisdom. It looked more like sheer futility.

Promyss acknowledged their presumption but argued that it was justified. If the Churches had not yet suc-

ceeded that fact made it all the more necessary that laymen should help them. They were amateurs. But so were the founders of *all* the great religions—their own not excepted. Not one was a professional priest. Professional priests had their uses. So had the more religious of the laity. Promyss and his friend did not propose to set themselves up in *opposition* to the Churches. They meant to work *with* the Churches—to carry on the self-same work with the self-same object but by means of a different instrument. When men like Hope and Faith took up a thing they meant to see it through. Their scheme would not be allowed to fizzle out ineffectively.

Frank Kritik saw the point and agreed to join ; and Promyss felt that in him they would have one who would keep them up to the mark and save them from that dangerous self-complacency to which they would be liable.

The outer ring of the “nucleus” was now completed. They had got together a compact tight little body, all naturally disposed to be religious, all bound together by a common aim, all prepared to participate in a common work, each making his own special contribution, and each being helped by the contribution of the rest.

Now they would have to go further afield and gather round them less essential but still useful and necessary members of the society they would have to form to put their ideas fully into operation.

But Golden Promyss felt that before they proceeded further he must have a straight talk with Vicker, the parish priest, and put the whole matter squarely before him. What Frank Kritik said had gone home. He did feel that they were presumptuous in attempting what the clergy with all their experience and

training had not yet succeeded in doing. And Vicker might think so too. But it was necessary at all costs to avoid a direct clash with him. Promyss wanted rather to have his support. They ought to be able to work together. They had the same ultimate end in view, and there was no reason why they should collide.

Still this was a critical move and Promyss was anxious.

CHAPTER X

VICKER

A DELICATE mission now lay before Golden Promyss—he had been deputed to interview Vicker, the parish priest, and I could see by his nervous manner that he was acutely anxious. For all his ease and smiles and air of assurance when in full action, *before* action he was terribly on edge. And now he seemed to be suffering real tortures. For success or failure of his whole enterprise depended, in his eyes, on the result of the mission he had in view.

He had made up his mind that, at all costs, he must carry Vicker with him. It would have been abhorrent to him to proceed in his undertaking without Vicker's blessing and whole-hearted support. Yet he knew full well that, if the matter were not properly presented, Vicker might easily take offence. He might regard the whole movement as a schism, as calculated to divide Holm in twain and draw people away from the Church. And if Vicker misunderstood the movement he might actively oppose it. Or, if he did not actually oppose it, he might view it with disapproval and heavily discountenance it. And this would be more pain to Promyss even than open opposition.

For he had a real liking for Vicker personally, and would not wound his feelings for all the world. And at heart he had a deep love for the Church: far from wanting to cause division he wanted to bring the people of Holm more together and imbue them more with religion. He wanted to supplement not supplant Vicker in his work.

I was quite aware of this. Yet I could see clearly enough that Promyss had cause for anxiety. For on the fundamental things in life men feel very deeply; and when they feel very deeply they are apt to oppose one another with special violence. This opposition need not mean actual division, as at bottom they may all the time be firmly united. But it may *lead* to division and heart-burning and soreness of soul if not treated with finest delicacy and forbearance. Vicker could hardly be expected at the first flush to welcome this movement. It would seem at first to be treading on his own ground. And unless he were approached with the deference that was fully his due he might resent interference with his own allotted work. He belonged to a great and ancient institution, dating back a thousand years and more. He would feel all the weight of its authority behind him. And he might well look upon Promyss as a mere dabbler in great and sacred things, who must be summarily stopped from treading on holy ground.

Vicker had, too, long experience in dealing with men and women in every grade of society—the rich and the poor, the gentle-born and the simple-born. And he had seen them in sickness and in health, in adversity and in prosperity, in the grief of funerals and in the gaiety of weddings. And this touch with life in its various phases had given him deep spiritual wisdom. And Promyss might seem—and Promyss indeed did feel—very immature beside him.

Yet Vicker was too innately courteous, too well-bred, too cultivated to reject the proposal with scorn or straightaway pour cold water upon it if it were earnestly and convincingly put before him. In church he had to be much aloof and apart from his congregation. This was ordained by the Service and he had

to conform to the usage. But in private life he was very human and accessible. He had had a hard struggle with life, facing poverty, and in his parish work incurring much obloquy. He was the butt of every grievance. Many disappointments he had suffered. There was little to show for all the hard work he had put in and the sacrifice he had made. And if he had not been fortified by the Christian spirit he might have been a soured man. As it was these trials had only made him more considerate. And Promyss knew that he did have the spiritual welfare of his flock most truly and genuinely at heart. That was his one great object in life—his one thought and anxiety. And if he could be persuaded that the scheme was for the good of Holm, Promyss was sure he would not let any private personal considerations stand in the way.

Still, the issue of the meeting between the old ecclesiastic and the young reformer was highly doubtful. The one stood for authority : the other for freedom. The one for the old order : the other for the new. The one for the good : the other—perhaps—for the better. I was most anxious about the result. Promyss would need the lightest touch and the most unshakeable good-will if he would succeed. He must arouse no antagonism. He must offend in no slightest way that pride Vicker must rightly have in the ancient church he represented. And he must put his case both clearly and very persuasively.

Could he do this was the question ?

He told me afterwards that it had been hard but he had succeeded. Vicker had very properly made him prove his case up to the hilt. He was not going to have the spiritual life of Holm tampered with unless he was quite sure no harm would be inflicted.

And he had drawn Golden Promyss out to his full stretch. But quite as much, I am sure, from his bearing and his winning ways as from his arguments, Promyss had convinced Vicker that he had a scheme which was worth trying. It certainly would not do harm and it might do good. Vicker, therefore, eventually withdrew all opposition and said he would not stand in its way but would watch its working. By its fruits he would judge it.

This was the final upshot of the meeting. And according to Promyss what had happened was this. He had told Vicker that Vera Love, Grace, Faith and himself—all firm believers in the value of religion and of the life and teaching of Jesus—had banded themselves together to aid the Church in quickening the spiritual life of Holm. They did most truly and fully appreciate all the good work the Church had done for ages past. Without it Ourownland would never have attained its present spiritual position. The Church had aroused the conscience of the people. It had heightened the sense of compassion for the poor and afflicted. And it had always stood for the higher against the lower in human conduct. It was a great national institution and they had a deep affection for it.

Nevertheless, they did think the Church failed to meet the requirements of the present day. That was not due to any lack of zeal, or of hard work, or of generous self-sacrifice on the part of individual clergymen. It was due to the clergy allowing the laity too little share in directing the spiritual life of the country. All was laid down for them. All was given to them on authority. And the present proposal (which Promyss put in detail before Vicker) was for the laity to take their full share. They would participate with the

clergy in directing the spiritual life of Holm. They would take their part in meeting the anti-religion, the irreligion, and the appalling indifference to religion that was so prevalent all over the country.

Vicker had been startled at the audacity of such a proposal. But Golden Promyss had persuaded him that it was really only a proof of the success of the Church—not of its failure. The more spiritual laity of the present day were the ripe fruits of the work done by the clergy for centuries. They would never have been what they were except for the work of the clergy. But being what they were, they could no longer be satisfied with their present position in the Church as a whole. It was a minor position—a position of inferiority. And they naturally rebelled against the spiritual subjection in which they were still kept. They were no longer children. They were adults. And like children when they were grown up they were in revolt against being kept in leading strings. They were straining to go out into the spiritual world free and unfettered and to make their spiritual life in their own way.

Vicker here argued that this was all very well in theory but in practice might lead to many dangers. The Church with its wide and long experience hoped to save men from these dangers. There were great perils in the spiritual life and the inexperienced might unwittingly come to terrible grief and involve others with them.

Promyss admitted this, but urged that it was only by walking that they could learn to walk. They could never learn if they were always held by the hand.

He urged further that the promoters of his scheme were men and women of spiritual experience. They had known what life meant. They had themselves

experienced its risks and dangers. And the fact that they were amateur laymen and not professional clergy should not disqualify them for spiritual leadership, as laymen had frequently played a leading part in the spiritual life of the world. The great Founder of Christianity was himself a layman, and so was every one of the Apostles. So also was the greatest Christian since Apostolic days, namely St. Francis. So also was the Founder of Buddhism. And so also was the Founder of Islam. The Founders of all the great religions were laymen.

This circumstance had not struck Vicker before. He was considerably impressed by it. And any resentment he might have felt was allayed when Promyss went on to emphasise that he did not mean to imply that all the good in religion was due to laymen and that priests were only obstructions. He insisted that laymen could only do what they did because they were brought up in that atmosphere of religion maintained by the priests. He recognised that all these laymen owed an immense debt to the priesthood. The priests had loyally kept up the sacred traditions and had preserved the conditions requisite for the development of spirituality. Christ himself had been nurtured in the Jewish Church. He spent much of his time in the synagogue. He loved visiting the Temple at Jerusalem. And his great desire was to see it cleansed and made a fitter place for the worship of God. All great lay religious leaders had felt the same.

Yet the time came when they rebelled against the trammels of the letter and against the formality. They yearned for the true spirit of devotion and worship. And they yearned above all to express their own souls themselves. They resented so much being done

for them by the priests. They wanted to pray and praise and worship for themselves, in spirit and in truth. Worship in common, certainly, but voicing their own feelings not having them voiced in set fashion by a priest.

The Church services had primarily been intended for common worship. The Church was a place of worship. And the services had been meant for common prayer and common worship by the whole people. They would come together on Sundays and other times to pray to God and to worship Him. And to this, in time, had been added the sermon or teaching of the word of God and the proclaiming the Good Tidings of God's forgiving Love.

But the form of service, as it had crystallised in the course of a thousand years, did not fully meet the needs of the people to-day. The people *themselves* did not sufficiently participate. Even in the ancient synagogue a layman, like Jesus, could discuss the word of God, and give his interpretation of it. And in the early days of Christianity the communities used to meet together on much more even terms. There was no great gulf fixed between priest and people. One man might from his special qualities, become a *minister* to minister to the spiritual needs of the people. But there was no priest belonging, as it were, to a separate caste and apart from the people. Under the existing system for the priest who conducted the services and had the opportunity of expressing himself they might be stimulating and satisfying. For many of the laity they were cramping. Many a religious layman did not have sufficient chance of expressing his soul. Religion was stifled within him. It was inclined to dry up and wither away. He wanted a chance of using and exercising his religious capaci-

ties and so increasing them and heightening the enjoyment he ought to get from religion. And this he did not get. The present form of Service in the church was not true to the genius of the people. It was too set. It lacked spontaneity. Promyss realised that it could not now be altered to any appreciable extent. But this very unalterability of the form of service rendered it all the more necessary that additional means should be found to guide the religious thought and give expression to the religious feelings of the people.

So far the Church had been apt to think too much of the institution, too little of the individual, and to suppress rather than to develop ardent religious feeling. The proposed League would bring forward individual laymen. Among the laity—and especially among women—many saints and heroes were to be found. These were pearls beyond price who should be brought to the front and treasured and made the most of—not left unrecognised, as they were at present, and unused in the service of the country.

Such was the criticism Promyss had to make of the existing system of providing for the religious needs of the place. They were inadequate, he told Vicker. And laymen had the right to expect more. But not from the clergy. Laymen must provide that more for themselves. They could not and should not expect everything to be done for them by the clergy. They should act for themselves. For this reason he and his friends proposed to start a League which would continue and reinforce the work the clergy were doing for the spiritual life of the country. They had now learned to stand on their own legs and they would find their own way to God. The League would help in removing misconceptions of God and in making clearer the true

conception. They would also present pictures of the kingdom of God which would show its value, in the hope that when the people realised its value they would not fail to love it, and loving it to work to bring it about. These pictures of the kingdom of God and of its exemplification in the life of Jesus and in the lives of his great followers in all ages, might be presented in dramatic form, or in pictures or in words. They would be designed to appeal to different kinds of people in different ways, and to children as well as to adults. They would be *additional* means of bringing people to value religion and the Christian message. They would not, so Promyss urged upon Vicker, have the effect of drawing people *away* from Church. They would dispose men to go there.

Men would be filled with a deeper reverence for the Power and Majesty and Glory of that mighty and mysterious Power working in and through us and all things and would be attracted by Its Love as manifested in Jesus Christ. And they would be more, not less, disposed to go to Church for prayer, for communion with that Power and for praise and worship. Though when they went there they would undoubtedly expect fuller participation in the services, greater freedom in proclaiming the word, and more spontaneity in singing and praying. This was the custom among the early Christian community. And it is felt as an urgent need in all times of spiritual upheaval. The form must express not be allowed to stifle the spirit.

This was the general idea. And in all things they wanted to work *with* Vicker. They were aiming not at independence but at an interdependence between them and the churches.

As Promyss had before remarked, they wished not

to *supplant* but to *supplement* the work of the official ministry. There was ample room and profoundest need for both. The promoters of the movement were all church-goers, persons who had been brought up in the Church and recognised their debt to it. But they were grown up now. They wanted to stand on their own legs, and fend for themselves in spiritual as in political matters. And they, as Church-going laymen, believed that they were the best means of bringing non-Church going people to a livelier sense of religion. The League hoped to be the means of increasing rather than diminishing the congregations in the Church.

Vicker was at first considerably taken aback by the proposal. On the face of it the proposed League seemed like a rival to his Church. And it might be a dangerous rival, in spite of the good-will of its present leaders. It might draw away many of even his own small congregation—make them discontented and dissatisfied. And the laymen if they were not well advised might with their spiritual freedom be led to perversity and hatred. And schism and division might easily come about. Laymen had not the training or experience to share in spiritual guidance. They were children in such matters—mere amateurs. Left to themselves they might flounder about in the most awful morasses or find themselves on the edge of the most terrible precipices.

However, he was a man of sense. He had great confidence in Promyss and could not help being carried away by his dead earnest manner. And supported by Faith and Vera Love he should be able to carry through an adventure which might lead to disaster in inexperienced hands. Vicker, knew, too, that if the laymen chose to form a League he could not prevent it. And he recognised that in frankly speaking to him

about it before they launched their project they had shown a friendly spirit.

So he first thanked Promyss for having so openly declared his intentions. He then said how grieved and disappointed he was to think that the beautiful services of the Church did not fully satisfy him and his friends. It had been his heart's desire and his whole life's work to bring the kingdom of God to every single person at Holm. And he would have gone further than he did if he himself had had greater freedom and had not to act as the representative of a great and ancient institution; and also if it were not for the conservatism of the majority of those who actually attended his services.

But, if Promyss and his friends thought they had other ways of approaching God than through the Church services it was not for him to stand in their way. The main point was that, whether by means of the Church Ministry, or by means of the proposed League of laymen, or by any other means, the comforts and consolation, the refreshment, the power, and the beauty of religion should be brought home to every single man, woman and child in the place. He was convinced that the leaders of the League were men and women who would work with loyalty to the idea of the kingdom of God, even if they did desire a fuller independence. Their adhesion to the Church would be worth nothing if it were not voluntary. And if they worked for the kingdom of God they could only do good. They stood for the highest things in life as against luxury and materialism. And they *did* believe that Christ led them to these highest things. They held fast to this great belief. And they lived up to their professions. This he knew from what he had seen of their lives. They were men and women of

proved spiritual quality. And it was in winning and retaining the adhesion of such men to the Church that her true strength lay.

This Vicker frankly admitted to Promyss. He did not wish to repel such men. He wished to attract them. He could only therefore give them his blessing and pray for the success of their high endeavours. But he would beg them to fit in with his own activities and not clash with them.

Promyss of course agreed, and to clinch the good understanding that had been reached he invited Vicker to become an honorary member of the League and to come to the first meeting of the debating branch of the League and to allow the dramatic branch to have a performance of a Mystery Play in the Church.

Vicker replied that he had often himself had in mind the idea of holding meetings for the open discussion of fundamental problems. Preaching to people who could make no reply was often as dull to the preacher as to the hearers. He wanted to know what impression he had made, what difficulties his audience had in understanding his points, what doubts had to be met. He would gladly come to hear a paper read on some philosopher's view of the world. Then he and others could discuss it. It would be a convenient way of inducing people to open their minds.

As to giving a performance of a Mystery Play in the church—that of course could be done. It was a common custom in ancient days and it was now being frequently revived.

So ended, most happily, this crucial interview. Promyss had shown high wisdom in going straight to Vicker. The common habit of standing apart from the clergy and hurling vituperation at them was very

cheap but utterly ineffective. It was about on a par with small boys throwing stones at a Church window. It only brought shame on the revilers. But Promyss had only one object in view—the good of his country. The Church was a most powerful instrument there ready to hand for achieving that good. And he did not want to damage that instrument and render it in any way less useful. He wanted to make it still more effective. “I want to make it a far better instrument than it is for hastening the kingdom of God in Our-ownland,” he said to me as he related what had happened, “and I am convinced that Vicker is as ready to work with us as we are to work with him.”

CHAPTER XI

THE ZENITH LEAGUE

HAVING now made sure of Vicker's support Golden Promyss and the nucleus of the society he was trying to form could now go full steam ahead in gathering in adherents. They had necessarily at this stage to take in only those whom they might count on to work heart and soul with them. Persons like Fikkel Kaprees and Vapid Worldling they would leave alone for the present. They could be tackled at a later stage when the society was firmly established. They led empty lives, doing neither themselves nor anyone else either very much harm or very much good. They were merely futile, with potty little sins and potty little virtues.

First they enlisted in the service of the proposed Society a loyal henchman of Faith's named Glad Ardour. He was an energetic little man who never seemed to tire and could be trusted to do all the hard, fatiguing, detailed work of the Society. He would pitch himself clean into the thing of the moment and whatever he did he would do with a smile. Faith had always depended largely on him and could not do without Ardour in the difficult enterprise on which they were now embarking.

Then for getting people together to attend the representations which the Society would make there could be no one like Ernest Interest. Usually he had the appearance of being lethargic and attracted little notice. But once he was aroused he was full of an infectious enthusiasm which communicated itself to

everyone round. He had the knack of carrying people along with him. And if the Society could once attract Ernest Interest they could be certain of his getting most people at Holm to come to their meetings.

How to attract him was the problem. And here again Vera Love proved her usefulness. She knew that he would do for her what he would do for no one else. She spoke to him in glowing terms of all their ambitions. She told him how confident of success were Faith and Hope. And she gradually kindled in him some of her own enthusiasm. He threw aside his sleepy ways. Soon he was as keen as Vera Love herself and could be depended on to inflame others with something of her own holy zeal.

Another recruit was Gay Kurridge, an open-faced, clear-eyed young man of the finest temper and ever ready for any adventure. In the war he had shown that the greater the peril the higher his spirits. In danger he was smiling and seemingly easy-going and careless—though, as a fact, in calculating risks beforehand he was always grave and thoughtful. Nothing ever daunted him, but he was never so rash as he appeared.

Percy Veerance had not the cheeriness of Gay Kurridge. But he was a dogged, persistent fellow who would stick steadily on to his job and let no worries disturb him.

Constance Payshence was something of the same type. She was quite imperturbable. Nothing could disturb her. However hard things were going she would stand up steadily against them. And she was wonderful with children.

Lily Innocence was a young woman with a round, open, fearless face like a Madonna, and with the voice of an angel. Singing was her life. Her song trilled

forth as naturally as a bird's. She did not care to sing except in sacred music. But into hymns and oratorios she would put such sweetness of soul that she would melt everyone to tears—to tears of sheer joy in the beauty. The singing of such a woman would be a priceless asset to the society. And she herself was thankful for the opportunity she would have of exercising her glorious faculty. She was one of those stainless souls who exercise an extraordinary power for good by their mere radiance. In her presence it was quite impossible to harbour a single murky thought or unclean desire. She must have schooled herself through many years to keep from her soul the slightest taint of evil. And she had evidently seen God, for goodness simply *shone* forth from her.

Then there was Mother Devoshun, a simple-hearted, single-minded woman who had a way of completely emptying her whole self into other people, or into a particular service. She had no thought whatever for herself, but gave up her whole life to the service of the children in her charge. For she was a nurse and lived in rapturous admiration of her charges. Every little goose was for her a swan of the first magnitude. Not that she failed to recognise their faults: she saw every one of them and sternly admonished the delinquents. But any little naughtiness there might be was, in her eyes, nothing in comparison with the goodness. And she would care for and champion her charges as the most priceless possession. And this admiring of her charges had given her a wonderful capacity for admiration in general. She had an extraordinary power of seeing goodness and beauty in most unexpected quarters and of then spending her whole soul in the worship of it. Her prayers and her singing and her entire demeanour in Church were a perfect expression

of this feeling. And this power of worship made her remarkably attractive to other people. They naturally loved one who could so admire beauty and goodness. They thought she must have a most loving soul to be able to do it. And every one loves a loving soul. And all her admiration of children or of anything else was based on a fervent love of God. She was a really pious woman and could be counted on to give herself wholeheartedly to the service of the League.

Flaming Zeele was more of the type of Glad Ardour. But he was always in such dead earnest he had little of the latter's attractive good cheer. He was for up and doing then and there, at that very moment and on that very spot. He could see no other view but his own and could tolerate no compromise. He was, in fact, something of a fanatic.

Fervent Dezyre was not so active. But she was perpetually in a white heat of longing for something far out of her reach which she was incessantly stretching her arms out to gather.

And somewhat like her was Eager Aspiration—though about him there was more buoyancy. He was always on tip-toe—on the verge of floating away upward to his heart's highest hope.

And Happy Daring *would* actually let himself go. He would not merely stand on tip-toe: he would have thrown himself in the air if that were possible, and, as it was not, he would climb the most hazardous peaks. And the more dangerous the position the more beaming would be his smile.

Of a more solid type—more firmly rooted in the ground—was Stedfast Fortytude. He would stand grim like a rock against wave after wave of misfortune and be a sure refuge for others in distress.

Lastly, came Manly Simplicity, of so plain and

straightforward a nature that he was transparent as glass.

These were the twenty original members of the proposed society, carefully picked out of the total population of about 3,500. All were known to one or other member of the primal nucleus, and could be safely vouched for. The aims and objects of the League had been carefully explained to each by one or other of the nucleus. And they had been chosen out of rich and poor, highest class and lowest class, highly educated and poorly educated. The one qualification sought for was a real desire to quicken the spiritual life of Holm and some capacity for contributing to that end. Some excelled in one quality and some in another. But it was hoped that in their togetherness they would be able greatly to help each other. The gifts of one would make up for the deficiencies of the others. And the spirit of the whole would draw out the fullest capacities of each. Their eventual gradation would be according to the spirituality they developed.

All these having been approached and thoroughly informed of the objects of the proposed League, and all having agreed to join, a day was appointed when they should meet together for the actual formation of a society. It was a crucial day for Vera Love and Golden Promyss as it would mean the definite embodiment of their main idea, and much of its future success would depend upon the form that body took—upon whether the body then formed would be capable of adequately expressing the idea.

When the meeting took place in Hope's house, Faith was asked to take the Chair, and he at once invited Vera Love, as the originator of the whole idea, to put that idea before the meeting so that from

the very start they might have it clearly in their minds.

She thereupon first asked them to join with her in prayer and she prayed long and earnestly for the success of the meeting and of what would follow from it. She besought God for guidance in all their endeavours, so that they might be truly in the central line of His purpose in the world and be the means of fulfilling that purpose: for then they would be sure of having His full power behind them and must assuredly triumph.

After the prayer she proceeded to explain what it was she had at heart. Quite shortly it was to show how lovable holiness was. They wanted to show forth the beauty of holiness, and attract men to it as they are attracted by none of the entertainments and amusements and luxuries of ordinary life. If only men could once feel the attraction of holiness—if they could know the happiness it brings, the downright peace and contentment of soul—they would attach not the slightest value to anything else in comparison. This was her key idea. And now they had to work it out in practical application.

Here Golden Promyss took up the tale. He said they were embarking on a great experiment. They were out to quicken the life of Holm, to make life more alive, intensify it, sting it into vivid heat. They wanted to spiritualize Holm—to heighten the spirituality of the place in the hope that what was done there might be done elsewhere till the whole of Our-ownland had become a fit kingdom of God. That was their ultimate object. It was what the Churches were working for and the laymen must do their part. They were all Church people and they must work with the Churches.

He then elaborated the scheme which Grace and he had worked out for getting up tableaux, giving performances of sacred plays, holding sacred concerts, and having discussions on religious beliefs.

The idea and the means proposed for carrying it out having been put before the meeting discussion and opinions were invited.

Flaming Zeele rose at once. They were in for the thing, he said, and they must go in for it with their whole hearts, not by halves. All or nothing must be their motto. They had got hold of a splendid idea, and he would like to see them speaking, and playing sacred plays all over the country and now at once. Why wait?

Glad Ardour and Happy Daring were equally eager to go ahead at full speed.

Frank Kritik opposed the impetuosity. They must get on their legs before they could run. He entirely approved of the ultimate end they had in view. But they had a great deal to get into shape before they could even start for it. They must begin slowly. They must feel their way. If they dashed off in a hurry they might come sprawling to the ground and be a laughing-stock instead of an example.

The meeting, on the whole, agreed with him.

Eventually a Committee was elected consisting of Vera Love, Grace, Clere Lyte and Frank Kritik, with Faith as Chairman, Hope as Honorary Treasurer and business manager, and Promyss as Honorary Secretary. These were to draw up a constitution and rules which would be submitted to another meeting of the whole Society. There was to be no rigidity. The constitution was to be pliable and flexible to meet growing needs and developments. But it was to be firm enough to fix the main principle and keep it inviolate.

Provision was to be made for the Chairman to be changed every three years and for the members of the committee to retire in rotation. The way must be kept open for ordinary members of the society to rise into the management, so that it should not stagnate and crystallize. And the society was to be divided into three main branches, the Sacred Play branch to be presided over by Grace, a Musical branch which Vera Love would lead, and a branch for the discussion of religious truth over which Clere Lyte would preside. And it was generally agreed that once they had made rules for themselves they must abide by them. Chairmen must exert their authority and enforce discipline for they had a difficult and extremely delicate task before them and it was essential that they should all work together as one man. They might develop their individualities to the full but each must give the whole of himself for the good of the whole. And they must so play into one another that an outsider would be unable to tell where the activity of one ended and of another began—all he should be able to see should be the main general effect.

Finally, the name for the society had to be chosen. Various suggestions were put forward. The Amateurs' Spiritual Society, the Laymen's Union and others. Eventually it was decided to call it The Zenith League for its short title, and for the full title The Zenith League for quickening the spiritual life. And it was to be composed of a Sacred Drama Society, a Truth Society, and a Sacred Music Society.

To become a member of the League a candidate must not only take an interest in the spiritual welfare of the place but be prepared to work for it—and to give of the very best of which he was capable and to submit to the discipline.

In concluding the proceedings Faith said they had finished with talking and must now get to work. "The high ambitions we have we had better keep to ourselves—tuck them away in our hearts and say little about them. We must not let people think we are setting ourselves up above our fellows. In quietness and in confidence must be our strength. We are doing our best to understand and carry out God's purpose and as long as we do that we shall have Him with us. What more do we want? We may be certain that if our purpose is His purpose it will be fulfilled. In that certainty let us now get down to business."

Subsequently, it was decided that the Zenith League should have the skylark for its emblem, azure-blue for its colour, and "The Highest" for its motto.

The lark was chosen as the emblem because it has its home on the very ground, in direct touch with the earth, and spends most of its time earning a living and supporting its home there close to earth, yet also has its moments of ecstasy when it leaves the earth and rises to heaven, and in its delight never ceases to sing as it soars. The members of the Zenith League wished to go and do likewise. They meant to earn their living in the ordinary, earthly way, but hoped, on occasion, in the ecstasy of spiritual delight, to burst into song and soar as they sang.

Azure-blue was chosen as their colour because they wished to be as pure and hopeful as the sky.

"The Highest" was chosen as their motto because they proposed to be continually reaching upward to higher and higher perfection.

A small badge was also designed to embody these

ideas. It represented a skylark, in the act of soaring, against a sky-blue background. And the badge was always to be worn by members of the Zenith League within the precincts of Holm. It served to signify their fellowship in devotion to the same holy cause.

PART II
GROWTH

CHAPTER XII

THE TRUTH SOCIETY

THE Executive of the League now proceeded to the execution of their aims—proceeded without haste but without rest. Steadily, persistently, unflinchingly and untiringly they pursued their object.

While Grace was busy getting up tableaux, Promyss began organising meetings of the Truth Society. He did not anticipate that at first much interest would be taken, for the people had never been accustomed to speak about and discuss the truths of religion. They were curiously reticent in religious matters. Great political principles, great scientific principles, great economic principles were freely discussed. But the discussion of great religious principles was almost unknown. At the utmost they might be got to listen to a paper; but it was not likely that they would discuss.

Discussion was, however, a necessary means of reaching religious truth and Clere Lyte was bent upon promoting it. A start had to be made and Promyss induced Ernest Interest to read a paper on Bergson's View of the World. He had been attracted to the writings of the French philosopher and an exposition of his philosophy would be a useful peg on which to hang a discussion.

In due course Ernest Interest read his paper before the Truth Society and expounded the French philosopher's well-known principle of the *élan vital*—the vital impulse—which was the effective cause of creative evolution. He showed how Bergson described

this as a perpetually shooting forth like the rockets in a firework display. We were all impelled by the *élan vital*. It was within each of us. And in its essential nature it was like maternal love—ever reaching forward to something beyond. There was an initial impulse given to the world. And after that everything proceeded from that impulse. But there was no goal towards which things were making. No plan—like an architect's plan of a cathedral—was being gradually carried out. All in front was open. The present was made by the past and was continually making the future.

Vicker then led off the discussion. He contended that at the source of the evolutionary process and working all through it must be a Personality—with intelligence, and feeling, and will. Vicker also held that this Personality must be making towards some goal. The world was not spluttering about in any and every direction. Even fireworks went upward. And we could ourselves feel that we were being impelled towards the good and away from the bad. The Personality was therefore making for good and could be called God. And the good He was making for was what we generally knew as the kingdom of God.

All we are and see is witness to the working of a mysterious, ever-present Power in whose womb the whole world was born—a Mighty Spiritual Power which both fills His creatures with awe and attracts them with love. And it is the natural instinct of man to work in with this Power, and to fall down and worship Him and return thanks to Him for all his benefits.

This Power is what we call God. And His presence can be felt everywhere and everywhen. God is the sublimest object which the mind of man can imagine.

What in our minds we can conceive as the highest thing possible—*that* is God. And that it is and much more that is beyond our imagination—that governs the world. And God is unfailing *activity*. By Him are all things. He lives and moves in them as they live and move in Him. He brings them into being, nourishes, sustains and develops them. And if He were to fail but for a moment all things would vanish into nothingness.

Vicker in conclusion said that he believed that Bergson also admitted that consciousness, or supra-consciousness must be behind the *élan vital*—that at the foundation of all was personality, or super-personality.

After Vicker had spoken there was an awkward pause for some time, as people were unaccustomed to arguing about these high matters, though they were deeply interested in them. At last Thomas got up. He was a confirmed doubter. He liked to see things with his own eyes before he could believe in them. He said they talked about God loving us and told us we ought to love God. But how could we love anyone we could not see and touch? We loved a man because we could see him there before us, and watch what he did, and grasp him by the hand in gratitude for love he had shown us. But how could we love a kind of invisible ghost who was prying about everywhere, noting all our nasty secret sins without our being able to see Him?

This little speech set the meeting thinking and also freed their minds. Thomas had put into words what many others had also been thinking. His speech also emboldened Ennyman to ask some further questions. Why wasn't the world good already? If God was working in the world, or on the world, and God was

good, and God was omnipotent, why hadn't He made it perfect at the start—or perfect long ago? Where was the sense in creating sinners like ourselves when He might have created perfect beings? When a man is making a machine he tries to make it as perfect as he possibly can. If he could make it absolutely perfect he *would*. If God *could* have made the world and us men perfect why hadn't He?

This and other innumerable questions, some sensible, some irrelevant, were fired upon Vicker now that tongues were once loosened. But the chairman checked any symptom of discourtesy or irreverence. We were pursuing Truth and we must pursue her like gentlemen, he said: she would never allow us to approach her if we were rude.

Vicker in reply said they must excuse him if he could not in ten minutes give a complete and final answer to all the problems of existence. He would reply briefly now and they must come to Church and listen to what he had to say there if they wished for a completer answer. With regard to the last speaker he would suggest to Ennyman that the reason why God did not make us perfect at once was just because He did *not* want to make us *machines*. If we had been created incapable of doing evil we would have been equally incapable of doing good. We would have been mere automata. We would exist in an awful state of stagnation. We would have none of the thrill of progress. With no chance of failure we would have no joy of success. All would be flat, and insipid. As to Thomas's difficulties we had evidence of God's goodness in the loving care that was taken of us from the time we were little things and in the fruits of the earth which were provided for us. And when God thus first loved us, should we not also love Him?

Clere Lyte in summing up said the main question before the meeting was the nature of the world; and his view was that we got the best idea of the real nature of the world by studying its most perfect production. That best production would show what it was in the heart of the world to produce. What was the best production? Undoubtedly, man. And who was the best man? Undoubtedly, Jesus Christ. If, therefore, we wanted to know what was the true nature of the world we lived in and from which we were born we should study Christ. As all who had studied him knew, what he mainly insisted on was love. Love, then, was what the world was in its essential nature.

In conclusion, Clere Lyte thanked Ernest Interest and also Vicker. He had helped them to break the ice, and Lyte hoped that the people at Holm and he would now feel much more closely in touch with one another in matters of religious belief. Vicker would know what laymen's difficulties were and be better able to meet them.

Promyss had taken no part in the discussion, but he had been the guiding hand behind it all and was excellently pleased with the result. They had made a good start; and he must now address himself to keeping it up. It might be difficult to sustain it at a high level, to get persons capable of reading a valuable paper or to contribute to the discussion. This he foresaw. But if interest flagged he must get speakers from neighbouring villages, or from Towne, in exchange for some he would send from Holm.

About once a month during the winter the meetings continued. They did not attract as many people as the plays. But people certainly appreciated them.

The paper that attracted the most attention and

most stirred people to thought was one on "Freedom" by Fyre Brand. Vera Love and Grace had at first hesitated to have him to speak. He had very extreme views, and they feared he might disturb people's minds rather than help them. Promyss had no such fears. He had a great deal in common with Fyre Brand, and a sneaking regard for him. And he knew Clere Lyte would be able to steady the people at Holm and keep them from running off the rails.

Fyre Brand was an interesting figure, and a word or two about him will be necessary. He was a clever young journalist on the staff of the "Daily Message"; and he was invited down from Towne because he represented what was going on in the minds of many students at the universities, not only of Ouwownland but of most countries. He was brilliant in his way. The trouble was that feeling himself intellectually superior to most of his fellows, he had kicked against the inferior position in which he found himself. He was the son of a small boot-maker in a provincial town and had achieved distinction at the university. But always he bore with him a sense of grievance at his social position. What right had those with only money and no brains to assume an air of superiority towards him? Why should he have to work for his bare existence when they enjoyed all they wanted without having to work at all? And why should he now have to be writing on the sordid details of the seamy side of life when all his inclination urged him to write on the great problems of existence and he had the intellectual capacity and the learning to do it?

He was a thoroughly disgruntled young fellow. He rebelled against the whole existing order of things—against the social order and against the moral code.

He wanted to be free—to do what he liked and to say what he liked. Why should he be prevented by stupider people than himself from being what he liked? He was a born rebel, in fact. And he was a rebel against society not only on his own account but on behalf of others also. There were many others in his own position. Why should they tamely submit? He revolted against the whole civilisation of the times.

As a student he had been impressed by Ibsen and Strindberg and Nietzsche and Stepniak. He had nearly suffocated in the stuffy atmosphere of his provincial town. He longed for something strong, and free-flowing, and courageous; and he had joined a Students' Society of kindred spirits who met and discussed with the greatest freedom and vehemence and candour all the fundamental questions of life. They prided themselves on being free-thinkers and revolutionaries, and had caused a scandal in the town by marching in a procession with working-men with banners bearing revolutionary mottoes. They sang revolutionary songs. They supped together and talked revolution. Socialism, communism, capital and labour, religion, Church and State, and above all the relations of the sexes were the principal subjects they discussed. And they took themselves very seriously. They were the heralds of the dawn. They would inaugurate a new era.

This life of talk was all very well at the university, but when Brand's time there was up and he had to go out into the world he found it none too easy to make a living. Manual labour he was above. The life of a clerk he abhorred. He would be a great writer; and as a commencement he wrote articles to newspapers. But he had staked his whole life on atheism

and freedom of thought; and articles on these subjects brought in little money. He had, in consequence, to endure the direst poverty, to live in the barest room, to eat the simplest food and the least possible of it, and to make his rough clothes last the longest possible time. It was a miserable existence, and he felt cheated of what was due to his intellect. Hence his general disgruntlement.

The Truth Society had engaged him to speak on "Freedom" because they wanted the people at Holm to know what young men of brains were thinking nowadays. And Fyre Brand at once left them in no doubt on that point.

Let us be sincere, he urged. Let us have the courage to say what we mean and mean what we say, and do what we say we mean. We have allowed ourselves to be bound by fetters. But they are fetters of our own making. They are man-made fetters. We must break our chains. We must shake ourselves free, and stand upright and look out fearlessly. We must break down the barriers and go our own way, dictate our own laws, erect our own standards.

Especially must we free ourselves from the bonds of religion. It is out-of-date—a myth—a superstition—now superseded by science. There is no God. The moral law is not made by any God. It is made by us men ourselves. All we have to consider is what we ourselves approve and what we ourselves condemn. We need not trouble about any hypothetical outside spiritual being whom nobody has ever seen. We need think only of ourselves—of our own happiness and nothing else. What makes us happy that we can do. What makes us unhappy that we can leave alone. Why should we work and labour for anyone but ourselves?

As to the relations of men and women with one another we were both of us born with a hungering for one another. We want each other. And the longing for each other must be satisfied. If the woman is willing and the man is willing who should say them Nay? Men and women were meant to be happy. When they can give each other happiness why shouldn't they? Nature made them for each other and intended them to be joined together. Why should men keep them asunder? Why should they repress their natural appetites and sterilise themselves?

Let a man and a woman be free to join together and free to part. Let them keep free of the bondage of marriage as from the ties of religion.

In these and in all other ways let us free ourselves from the tyranny of man-made laws. Let us rise above the mediocre and the commonplace to a higher, freer life. Let us abolish religion and abolish morals, and keep ourselves free to grow and develop in our own way. Let everyone be happy. Let us all shake off Christian smugness and hypocrisy, and refuse to be cramped by Christian humility—not be conscious of our *sins* but conscious of our *power* and our capacity for enjoyment. Let us preserve our self-respect and have the strong hand to take and the firm-will to hold and the manhood to be men and to enjoy our manhood.

“A fine rhapsody,” said Ennyman, at the conclusion of the address, “and now let us have some commonsense. A man is to enjoy his manhood, but what about the consequences?” “The State will look after them,” replied Brand. “In other words,” said Ennyman, “the rest of us will have to pay for the self-indulgence of any young scamp and his scape-grace girl. And what if the young fellow tires of the

woman and goes off to someone else? Either she will have to support herself or to look out for another man to support her."

Vera Love was indignant at the idea of children being brought up by Government. What would the next generation be like? How could State-fed and State-educated children possibly match children brought up by mothers who had loved to bear them and who could feel that they were their own? What Government Department could ever tend and care for a child as its own mother could?

Grace also wanted to know if it really was the case that all laws were man-made laws. Take the laws of art. A painter was free to paint whatever he liked. Yet he found by experience that there were certain laws which he had to obey or his painting would be a mere mess. And those laws were not *man-made*. It was the same with poetry and with music and with every other form of art. There was freedom only within certain limits under certain conditions. Might it not be the same in that greatest art of all—the art of living? Might it not be that it was only by keeping scrupulously within certain laws that we could attain the highest form of life and enjoy the highest form of happiness? Happiness certainly we had a right to. But there were low forms and high forms. We should be content with nothing but the highest. Happiness was contentment of mind. And true contentment of mind was not obtained by simple self-indulgence.

Fyre Brand in accordance with the custom of the Society had the last say. He said he went by results. Civilization had been at work for four or five thousand years and Christianity for nearly two thousand, yet hundreds of men like himself had to work for a mere

pittance while lazy, useless people had everything they wanted. He could not marry because he could not afford to. Others who could afford to would not because they did not care to be tied down. It was a rotten system and anyone with a spark of manhood in him would rebel against it.

He was sick to death of the holy wrath and righteous indignation which was poured out upon him. It was merely narrow intolerance with another point of view. He had plenty of indignation himself—and plenty of cause for it. But he did not call it righteous. He called it what it was—just plain indignation at the present state of things. And he was man enough to try and rid himself of all that hindered him from reaching his goal.

Fyre Brand's paper had at least caused people at Holm to think. And the next paper was on what many were thinking about. It was on "The Divinity of Christ"—was he or was he not Divine?

It was read by a priest of a neighbouring parish. His belief was that Christ was God—the son of God made man. He was made in the express image of God. He was not *a* son of God: he was *the* Son of God. He was of the same essence as God. He was a *perfect* manifestation of God. Those who saw him saw God. And this belief the priest held with every fibre of his being. And he brought the testimony of all the Churches—the most ancient Greek Church, the Church of Rome, and all the Protestant branches and sects—to support him. They all believed in the Divinity of Christ.

Christ was absolute perfection made manifest in a way that we can understand. And he was born of a Virgin's womb. God chose a being pure and holy to give him birth. God had come down to earth and

been born of a woman and led a human life. And Jesus was spotlessly holy—unique, perfect, sinless. He was the Ideal Man—man but God.

He was the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. And he had the infinite power of God. When Jesus spoke God spoke. His words were God's words and therefore divine law. His authority was God's authority. And God loved only those who obeyed Jesus. We must accept him as our Lord and Master and submit our reason, our will, and our conscience to him. All that he said and taught we must accept as truth and his commands we must regard as absolute perfection.

The priest's reasons for believing this were three.

Firstly, the Messiah foretold by the great prophets and so earnestly expected by the people of Israel was always thought of as Divine. Jesus was the Messiah. Therefore he was Divine.

Secondly, no mere man could have founded a Church such as we see it to-day—in the term Church being included all the various bodies which look up to Christ as their head. And when we see the divine work which that Church is doing, how it is slowly but surely instilling a new spirit into mankind, quickening the conscience of humanity, and sweetening its compassion, we cannot but admit that its Founder must be Divine.

Thirdly—and most conclusive of the three—Jesus openly declared Himself the Son of God. When at Cæsarea Philippi he asked his disciples saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am? and they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some Elias: and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets, he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? and Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the

Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona : for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

Again when he was brought before the high priest and the high priest said, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God, Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said (or according to St. Mark, Jesus said, I am). And it was for this that he was condemned and crucified. There is no doubt about his claim to divinity : he was condemned to death for it.

This was the view of the reader of the paper. Vicker took a somewhat different view. Certainly Jesus believed himself to be the Messiah. Yet he always considered his relation to God was that of a *man* towards God. He was related to God in the same way that all men ought to be related to God. And because he claimed to be the Messiah he did not therefore claim to be *equal* with God. The Jews themselves never thought that the Messiah would be God Himself, or equal with God.

Jesus was in every sense a man with the body of a man, the mind of a man, and the soul of a man. And though he revealed the nature of God as it had never been revealed before he did not *know* everything, nor could he *do* everything. He was neither omniscient nor omnipotent.

He was human, yet that fact did not necessarily imply that he was not also divine. His human nature may have reached such a height as to be divine. In Jesus, God may have revealed Himself in a unique and supreme degree. Christ was the highest manifestation of the character of God, and most fully declared the will of God. In that sense, and in that

degree, he was divine as well as human. But he did not presume to put himself on a *level* with God. When one came running, and kneeled, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life? Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God.

A Bank clerk who had heard of these meetings and become interested in them now took up the argument. He considered Jesus to be an ordinary human being, born in the ordinary way. Certainly a great man, as Plato and Aristotle were great. But he had not their intellectual capacity. And the vehement way in which he railed at his opponents the Scribes and Pharisees, even when dining with one of them, was less dignified than the suave and tolerant manner of Socrates towards his opponents. Jesus aroused unnecessary enmity. He stigmatised the Scribes and Pharisees as a generation of vipers, serpents, hypocrites, fools, and blind guides. He did not practice his own precepts towards his enemies. We must subject all Jesus said and did to exactly the same critical judgment that we would exercise in reviewing the sayings and doings of any other man. And when we did this we could not say that he was absolutely perfect. He was human not divine.

Clere Lyte followed. He held that Jesus must have regarded himself as the Messiah for it was on that charge that he was arraigned by the high priest and condemned. And there could be no doubt that he felt himself to have touched and did touch something higher and deeper than man had ever reached before. He had touched the heart of God, and God had touched his heart, and they had come into closer communion than either Moses or any of the prophets had done. He felt God in him. He felt the call of God.

He felt God speaking through him. It was through him that God revealed Himself to man. He was the agency, through which God declared Himself to men. To that extent Jesus was Divine. He was the representative of God on earth. And in the supreme moment of his baptism by the Holy Ghost he did touch absolute perfection.

But he was not God Himself any more than the most patriotic Swede—the Swede who was most completely and perfectly imbued with the spirit of Sweden—is Sweden itself, though he may *represent* Sweden and be her very embodiment.

Nor was Jesus—nor did he claim to be—the *only* Son of God. We are *all* children of God. He taught us to pray to “our” Father. We all of us have in us a *spark* of the Divine. In most of us it remains *only* a spark. But if we cherish the spark, and keep it burning pure within us, God may touch it till it bursts into flame. Whether we become divine or not depends on circumstances and conditions, as well as on ourselves. Garibaldi might never have become the flaming patriot he was if he had lived a century earlier or later. Anyhow, there is the hope for any one of us that the call may come, and that, if we are ready when it comes, we may become divine. We may attain to that higher level of being which Jesus reached, and which in the thousands and thousands of centuries ahead of the human race many others will also reach. And we may in so doing acquire that divine quality, that exquisite touch, and that mighty power for good which Jesus has shown us God can communicate to men.

Another paper which aroused great interest was on the Resurrection of the body. Do our bodies rest in

the grave and then rise again at the Judgment Day?

Hope, the reader of the paper, held that it was not our gross material bodies which would rise again but our *ethereal* bodies. Besides our material body we have an ethereal body, and it is that which survives bodily death. At death our spirit lasts on in ethereal form—in a form made out of the ether which fills all space—all space even in the atoms. The ether is invisible but is everywhere, and the resurrection of the body is the resurrection of the ethereal body.

The deeper self maintains an independent existence even when the body is destroyed. The soul lives after the body dies. A ghost, for instance, is the manifestation of a persistent personal energy of some kind or other. And people in every country see ghosts. There are innumerable cases, also, in which a drowning person appears to a loved one—a drowning son to his mother, for example. And there is the very remarkable case of the man who in full daylight, and nine years after her death, saw his dearly loved sister sitting by him, appearing as if alive, with her skin so life-like he could see the glow or moisture on its surface, and see on her face a *scratch* which he had never seen when she was alive but which, unknown to him, had accidentally been made by his mother. Many instances of voices being heard are also on record.

These apparitions and voices do not originate in the percipients' imagination. They are not subjective: they are objective. They have an origin outside our minds. An agent, perhaps undergoing a sudden crisis, such as drowning or a violent death, is able in some way to generate an apparition of himself which is seen by a distant percipient. The individuality of a departed person may still subsist in the spiritual world.

Jesus is the supreme instance. He must have had exceptional powers of originating and conveying a message and a vision of himself while certain men and women who are, at certain moments, exceptionally sensitive to the reception of spiritual impressions, have received his message and seen the vision of him.

Clere Lyte, commencing the discussion, urged that we must await the verdict of science in regard to apparitions. Much evidence seeming to favour the view that the self does survive the disintegration of bodily death has already been collected; and some notable scientific men profess themselves convinced of its truth and believe that the departed still live in an ethereal form and are able to communicate with us.

But, whatever the eventual result of these investigations may be, what is quite certain is, first, that *visions* of deceased persons do appear to those who have loved them; and, secondly, that the departed do live on in the souls of those they have loved, do live on in the soul of their *country*, and do live on in the soul of *mankind*.

Christ appeared to his disciples. They were convinced, and St. Paul was convinced, that Jesus continued to live in a "spiritual body." There is a "natural body" and a "spiritual body." And it was Christ in the spiritual body—the body that bears not the image of the earthly but the image of the heavenly—that was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve, after that of above five hundred brethren at once. And even now, nearly two thousand years after his death, he appears to certain people. There are many instances of such appearances.

But, altogether apart from any such apparitions, or "visions," there is the quite evident fact that *spiritually* he has risen. He still *lives*—lives in the

souls of countless thousands of Christians. He is ever working in them. The spirit which went forth from him in Palestine nineteen hundred years ago is still working in the spirits of men. And he lives the more in them—lives the more vividly and effectively in them—the more they live in *him*—the more they think his thoughts and feel his feelings.

The one great fact about which there can be no doubt is that he made such a sharp and vital impress on the souls of those who knew him, and the impress was of such creative power, that it has gone on working vehemently in the soul of humanity ever since. There, in *the soul of mankind*, Christ most assuredly lives on and on, world without end—and with such creative power that men are filled with a yearning to be like him and will devote their whole lives to recreating themselves and others in his image.

That much is most certainly true. And that much, in Lyte's view, was all that was necessary for our edification. We do know that he is working in us. And we do know that the more thought we put in to understanding him and the more determination we put in to acting according to his will the more like him we shall become. And the more like Jesus we are the more like God will we be. And the more like God we are the more shall we draw men to us. More than that we cannot want.

That is the Resurrection. That is the rising again of Easter Day. That is what is abiding and eternal. That is the ever living power. Jesus is still and for ever working in those who worship him.

And as he thus rose again so may we. But whether we live on vividly or faintly, for much good or for little good, depends upon two things. It depends, firstly, upon the depth and strength of the power of

God which we have developed in us in our life times. And it depends, secondly, upon the strength and persistency of the efforts of those who have known and loved us to *make* us continue to live in their souls.

If our lives have been fickle and vacant and inspired by little effort towards the good the impress we make will be slight, and few will care to make an effort to keep us alive in them. But if our lives have been steeped in the spirit of God and filled with His power, we shall have made a sharp, deep impress on the souls of those who have known us, on the soul of our country, and, may be also on the soul of humanity. And our dear ones, our country, and mankind will devotedly cherish our spirit and have it living and working in them. The care that is taken to *keep alive* the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi and numerous saints is evidence of this.

Vicker, continuing the debate, contended that though Jesus had been condemned and crucified because he declared that he was the Messiah, the Son of God, and his disciples had forsaken him and fled into Galilee, yet these same scared disciples had afterwards boldly returned to Jerusalem; and the reason they had recovered their confidence was that Jesus had "showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." Him "whom they slew and hanged on a tree God raised up the third day, and showed him openly: not to all people, but with witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead." "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses." And this fact—the fact that they had themselves seen Jesus alive, risen from the dead—is the only thing

that can account for the disciples regaining their confidence after they had forsaken him and fled at the time of his trial. To them it must have been a most convincing fact: it emboldened them to face almost certain death. His body had not been removed from the tomb. God, they were sure, had raised Jesus from the dead. There is another life beyond the grave. And all those who believe in Jesus Christ will rise like him and live with him in Heaven. This was their belief—and this was the teaching of the Church, said Vicker.

These are examples of the papers read before the Truth Society and the discussions held on them. I was present at some and noticed how interest in them grew. Even those who were still timid about taking part in the discussions liked to *hear* them. They enjoyed the opportunity of seeing things from different points of view. Their minds were not so much shaken as loosened. They became more fluid. And being more fluid they became more adaptive. And being more adaptive they became more capable of acclimatising themselves to the rare atmosphere of spiritual heights.

CHAPTER XIII

SACRED PLAYS

WHILE Golden Promyss and Clere Lyte had been getting up these meetings of the Truth Society, and striving to extricate the imperishable truth of Christianity from the overgrowths which were strangling it, Grace was arranging for the production of sacred plays.

She had had some experience of acting with the local Amateur Dramatic Society. She now went frequently to Towne to attend a course of dramatic instruction. She ascertained what were the most suitable sacred plays for presenting to a village audience. She saw some acted. And she also spent a fortnight at the yearly meeting of the District Dramatic Association where producers of village plays were instructed in the art of production. From the experience of others she gathered much that would help.

And always she kept in mind the lesson of the Oberammergau Passion plays. What these peasants could do the people at Holm could do. She had never seen these plays, but she had often spoken about them with those who had. And she was impressed by hearing that in the village it was everyone's ambition to act in the play, and only those were allowed to act who were truly worthy of the distinction. No bad liver would be permitted to take a part : his evil character would spoil the play in the eyes of the villagers. She also heard that the work of producing the play did have a remarkably spiritualising effect on the whole village.

Those two facts served to stimulate Grace's ambition. In neither respect must Holm fall below Oberammergau.

Dramatic art always had been connected with ritual in Hinduism as well as Christianity. Indeed it was probably religious ritual that gave rise to dramatic art. There was nothing incongruous therefore in producing religious plays in a church. And the custom has recently been growing up in Our own land. Grace had, from the first, been convinced that she could by means of these tableaux and plays profoundly influence the people, and all the time she could spare from her home duties she would now give, first to arranging tableaux representing scenes in the life of our Lord, and then to producing sacred plays. She believed that many people, like herself, could best reach God through the pursuit of beauty, and through the expression of beauty in art. It was the avenue to God readiest of access to some people. And of all the arts the dramatic art made deepest impress. Through representations of scenes in the life of Jesus, by acting the marvellously dramatic story, she believed that some could be moved to holiness as neither Vicker by his preaching nor Clere Lyte with his meetings could ever affect them.

But if these tableaux and plays were to be effective the actors themselves must be imbued with a sense of holiness. And Grace felt this so intensely that, quite unconsciously, she breathed some of her own ardent spirit into them.

She had first to select her company. For the tableaux this was not so difficult as for the play. But even for the tableaux certain little jealousies and bickerings had to be overcome, and the strong feeling in village communities against one being set up above

another. Vera Love was an obvious Madonna. Not that she was extremely beautiful. But there was no question as to the sweetness and purity and holiness of her expression; and she would enter into the part with nothing less than religious zest. For the part of the angels there was more difficulty. Lily Innocence would make a most exquisite angel. And her heavenly singing would be of priceless value. But it was not so easy to find others comparable with her. The parts of Joseph and the Magi were more easily arranged.

Then the costumes had to be thought out and made. Grace would have none but the simplest and none but of an Oriental type. They were not to be Italian or "mediæval." They were to be of the plain graceful type common in the East to this day. And they would be very easily and cheaply made up. The only care she had, and that was a very great one, was that these Eastern costumes should be full of colour and be worn gracefully—worn with that ease and grace one sees in the East.

The first tableau was to represent the birth of Christ and with it the dawn of a new era for mankind, the second, the coming of the Magi, guided by a star from the East. Vicker was to read verses from the Gospels relating to this, and to give a description. Before, during, and after the tableaux the organist and a violinist were to play sacred music, and the choir was to sing Christmas Carols.

All this required much organisation and fitting in and adjustment. For Grace wanted the entire performance to be an artistic *whole*—not a series of disjointed parts only loosely connected with one another. Each part must fit into other parts to make up a beautiful whole giving an effective impression of holi-

ness that the congregation would carry away with them.

Should the verses and description be printed on leaflets and placed in the seats, or should Vicker recite them? Should he recite them before any part of the performance commenced or during the actual presentation? What should the organist play before the curtain rose? What should be played or sung during the actual presentation? Where should the choir be placed? Should they be visible to the audience or should they be hidden? How should the whole presentation be closed?

All these points had to be decided and the decisions made to work so that the effect so ardently desired by Grace should be produced. She wanted there to be an air of solemnity and expectancy before the tableaux were presented. Then a sense of wonder as the dawn of the new era arose and was portrayed in the infant Jesus. And finally an outburst of joy and gladness as men realised the greatness of the wonder which had been revealed unto men.

A stage was erected in the chancel and the altar was used as a background. A curtain was fixed across the entrance to the chancel. And each tableau was shown behind a screen of gauze to preserve a sense of mystery. For Grace wanted to combine actual literal fact with infinite mystery. There would be presented an actual mother and babe, as in common every day life. But behind that commonplace fact would be the infinite mystery of love. This is what Grace wanted to have represented with all the aid of art.

The tableaux were presented on the evening of Christmas Eve. And so interested had the people at Holm become in the preparations for them that the

Church was crowded. Welcoming music was played on the organ as the people took their seats. And at seven Vicker in his robes walked up the aisle and from the steps of the Chancel in front of the curtain read verses from the Gospels telling of the birth of Christ. He then described the greatness of that event. Jesus was born in an insignificant village of very humble parents of a subject race. Yet now nearly two thousand years afterwards men realised that that lowly birth was the greatest event in human history. It marked the advent of a new life for men. Something divine had then come into the world; and for centuries afterwards men and women had eagerly striven to express both their gratitude to God for what He had then vouchsafed to men, and also their adoration of him who was then born into the world.

Vicker then withdrew. From the organ there pealed forth music of the sweetest solemnity but with it a note of highest hope and expectancy. The music ceased; slowly the curtain parted, and the tableau of Jesus in the manger was revealed—lowliness of birth in the very extreme. The world gasped in awe at the utter simplicity of so mighty an event.

Then men recovered themselves. The organ again pealed forth. But this time in jubilant strain. The curtain parted. And now the mother of Jesus is seated with the infant on her lap. Above shines the guiding star. Wise men from the East and wise men from many lands offer adoration to the Holy Child. Guided from above they saw the glory that had been revealed. In that new-born child a new light had come into the world—a radiancy of love that men had never known before. And it shone all round that scene. An angel voice was heard singing the *Nunc Dimittis*. The curtain slowly closed upon the tableau. And as it closed

the choir burst out into song singing carol after carol. Finally Vicker appeared at the chancel steps and pronounced the blessing.

Undoubtedly the performance did produce a deep impression on those who saw it. It made them understand, as they had not understood before, what an event the birth of Christ was. It inspired devotion to him. And about the whole presentation there was just that atmosphere of holiness that Grace had wanted to produce and which Vera Love and Golden Promyss had so much at heart.

Yet they were by no means fully satisfied. Tableaux were good as a start. And the production of them had enabled Grace to feel her way. But the performance of a *play* would make a far deeper impression. It would have action and movement. It would appeal more to the people.

Grace in Towne had heard of many sacred plays. But she had been more fortunate still. She had become acquainted with a young playwright, named Seer, who himself had much of the spirit of the Zenith League. He was a true visionary. He had in him something of the English poet and artist, Blake, and something of the American mystical poet, Whitman. He had already written some sacred plays. And she induced him to write for production at Holm some simple scenes from the life of Jesus—the baptism of Jesus by the Holy Ghost, Jesus teaching in the synagogue, and Jesus teaching on the mountain side.

The question was should the production be given in the Church or in the village hall? There was a more sacred and solemn atmosphere about a church. And there was the advantage of having the organ. On the other hand the village hall was more adapted for the

production of plays. The stage had been partly designed for that purpose, and the Amateur Dramatic Society constantly produced plays there. There were facilities for the entrance and exit of actors and for producing effects by lighting. And for the organ could be substituted a little orchestra. The village hall therefore was selected.

Doubts were expressed as to the feasibility of producing anything so ambitious. There was the risk—especially in a village hall—that the performance might fall flat or worse still, by its inadequacy, produce an impression of meanness. Instead of heightening the people's conception of Jesus they might lower it—make it trivial and commonplace.

An enormous deal would depend upon the actors. And Jesus himself would have to be introduced. It was a daring innovation. But Grace was confident that Golden Promyss could act the part. He was personally so imbued with the spirit of Jesus, and he had a voice which could be at once so supremely gentle in persuasion and vehement in denunciation she was sure he would not fail her. Flaming Zeele would take the part of John the Baptist, Faith that of Peter, Vera Love that of Mary, the mother of Jesus. The other parts were more easily arranged. The costumes they already had. And they already had begun to acquire what was more important, the spirit of the play.

From the Musical Society at Holm Vera Love was able to form a useful little orchestra. Lily Innocence could be trusted to sing most exquisite solos. And from among the members of the Church choir and others she made up a choir of her own.

The scenery Grace painted herself. She studied trustworthy pictures of the Holy Land and of the

dress worn by the people at the time of Christ. She thoroughly saturated herself with the atmosphere of the time and place. And she tried as before to preserve the real but give it an idealistic interpretation. It was a hard task. But she would attempt it.

She also strove with the aid of her little orchestra to impart a feeling of reverence before the curtain rose. When the time for the performance had arrived the hall was full, and the people all anxious for the play to be a success and to give it every chance. And they warmly entered into the spirit of reverence. And the play made a good start.

In the first scene Jesus was portrayed as a child of twelve in the Temple, listening rapturously to the wonderful old Hebrew scriptures and eagerly questioning people about them.

Time passes and in the next scene he is a full-grown man. He is depicted in a synagogue still listening to the sacred readings and discussing the advent of the long-promised Messiah. Discussing also the work of his cousin John the Baptist who was denouncing the evils of the present time, calling men to repentance and prophesying that there was one coming after him the latchet of whose shoes he was not worthy to stoop down and unloose. Strange stirrings were represented in the heart of Jesus, strange hopes and longings, and yearnings and questionings. Then he goes out to the wilderness to hear John. He is greatly stirred by the Baptist. But he is of a far finer nature than John—more delicate, more sensitive, more responsive to higher things. He feels a higher Call. In the exaltation of the moment he sees a Light that no man yet had seen—not even the most inspired men of old. It descends from heaven upon him and floods his whole being. He is radiant with a new joy. And the scene

closes with heavenly music and a voice singing, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

In the following scene Jesus is shown teaching in the synagogue, emphasising the spirit as against the letter of the law; impressing upon his hearers the need of going to essentials and of having right motives; pleading for purity of heart, fiercely denouncing all shams and hypocrisies; and countering the wily arguments of opponents with his own pithy wit.

In the final scene the aim is to show the essence of the impress which Jesus made on the Galilean peasants and which has had such a lasting effect upon mankind. He had performed many miracles but these were only important as testifying to the strength of the influence that radiated from him; and are not allowed to distract attention from his spiritual message. He had aroused the hostility of the scribes and Pharisees, but that hostility is now left in the background of the picture and not permitted to blur the main impression. He had taught many beautiful things but they were not very different from what others were teaching at the time. The chief intention of the scene is to bring out the personality of Jesus as he went about doing good, living the life of the people, attending marriage feasts, talking with fishermen on the lake, with women drawing water from the well, with little children as they come to look in wonder on him. The *holiness* of the man, the awe which he inspired and yet the charm with which he drew everyone to him, his tender compassionate heart, his utter sincerity and his love of every beautiful thing—that is what the scene depicted.

It was because he felt that he had God in him that

he was able to exercise the wonderful influence. And it was because of the magic of this influence with something in it so wholly different from any teacher of the time—John the Baptist, Hallel, Gamaliel, or any other—that his disciples regarded him as Divine. And it was this divine quality that Seer had tried to bring out in this scene.

It closes with the twelve being sent forth by Jesus, and his commandment to them to preach, saying, The Kingdom of heaven is at hand. They will be delivered up to the councils and be scourged in their synagogues. But when they are delivered up they are to take no thought how or what they shall speak; for it shall be given to them in that same hour what they shall speak. For it is not they that speak, but the Spirit of their Father which speaketh in them.

The disciples depart and the performance is brought to a close with triumphant music.

Grace and the actors were highly complimented on the performance. And the audience were certainly pleased with it. Nevertheless there was a vague impression that all was not well. The play itself was good but the performance was not really up to the subject. And Frank Kritik said quite decidedly that it would not do.

It did not produce the effect it was intended to have. It pleased people up to a certain point, and perhaps helped them to understand our Lord better. But it did not *grip* the audience—did not really move them, much less transform them.

It did not inflame them to a fever of holy fervour. It scarcely touched the hearts even of the already converted. It left them placid. And on the unconverted it would have scarcely produced a ripple.

The project of producing such a play in a village hall with only village actors was altogether too ambitious, argued Frank Kritik. The hall was unsuitable, even for ordinary acting, and still more for acting a sacred play. And the actors displayed a woeful lack of training. They meant well. But they were not up to the greatness of the task they were undertaking. Frank Kritik did not mince matters. He told the naked truth.

Grace herself acknowledged the truth. She was too good an artist not to see it. The play had been only that half-success which in her eyes was worse than a dead failure. It was a bitter disappointment to her. She had built such hopes on the play. In her mind's eye she had seen the scenes being most exquisitely acted and the audience thrilled with the great news that was being told. And now all had fallen flat. And Golden Promyss too was disappointed. All was so far far short of what he had hoped.

Personally, I thought the performance astonishingly good for village actors. Promyss had steeped himself in his subject and I thought acted the part with great feeling and understanding. However, the Sacred Drama Society had evidently set themselves a very high standard. And it was only through expecting too much that they were disappointed.

CHAPTER XIV

OPPOSITION

THE Zenith League had been at work a couple of years now and were certainly doing good. The question was whether they were doing *enough* good—whether they were likely to come up to their expectations.

One day I happened to meet Frank Kritik when he was in a communicative mood, so I walked along with him and had a talk about the whole question. He was always quite outspoken about their activities, but he did not merely carp at them. He was honestly anxious for them to succeed. He had the highest standard in his own mind of what they should do and judging them by that pointed out unsparingly where-in and why they fell short of it.

When I asked him how he thought things were progressing he said they were certainly making headway among the ordinary church-going people and a few others. There was a quickening of the religious sense of these few, they were understanding religious matters better and feeling more deeply about them. But among the non-Church-goers they were making scarcely any headway at all. And for one person who went to Church or to these meetings there were ten who didn't.

“It is mean of me to sit in judgment upon Promyss, for I have the greatest respect for him and admire the persistent way in which he goes about the work he has set himself. And I would be quite useless at doing anything of the kind myself. The only use I am is to point out where I see things going wrong—or

rather not well enough. And there I can be of use. And I do see that something more must be done to get at the *bulk* of the people."

He then spoke of the different kind of persons at Holm who had to be reached.

Ennyman he took first. He was an average man and fairly well represented the general attitude of the people. In the view of Frank Kritik he was quite a good fellow, straight and law-abiding, a lover of fair-play and not naturally indisposed towards religion, but quite unaware of what was in his deeper nature—or even that he had a deeper nature—and at present much under the influence of the prosperous and successful Sekuler Kulcher.

This same Sekuler Kulcher had, in fact, much influence at Holm. People judged by results. And by results there he was full of affluence. He had been brought up without religion, and principally on science. He had had to make his own way in the world and he had made it. Science had stood him in good stead. He had gone into business and put his back into the work. And, as he had become more absorbed in his business, his business had more and more absorbed him. It had fascinated him. He could not get away from it. There were splendid prizes before him. And he already had definite tangible results in hard cash. And hard cash was eminently useful in giving pleasure to his wife and family, raising their position in the world, and providing a good education for his children.

So allured had he been by his business that he now had little time or inclination for religion. What time he could spare he preferred to give to sport and games, for these took him into the open-air and gave him relief from his office. And in what leisure he had he

was much more attracted by science than by religion. He came across science a good deal in his business and it appealed to him. It dealt with concrete results and not vague generalities. Its results could be tested and were open to ocular demonstration. It proceeded by the method of experiment, both in the laboratory and in the field. Its conclusions could be proved up to the hilt. All this impressed Sekuler Kulcher. And he was, in consequence, disposed to accept the authority of men of science—accept it much more readily than he would the authority of men of religion, whom he considered well-meaning but misguided. He noticed that in the past religion had always opposed science but had always been forced to give way in the end. Science, therefore, and not religion would be his guide. And applied Science in practical life had had magnificent triumphs. Mechanical inventions based on the scientific knowledge of material, and of the laws and forces of nature had added enormously to the comfort of life and to human well-being. Men could now be transported from place to place with increasing speed and convenience by sea, land and air; they could communicate more and more rapidly with one another at almost any distance; they could combat disease; and they could increase the productivity of the earth. These were practical results which gave Sekuler Kulcher confidence in Science. And while he patronised Vicker and Promyss he had no doubt in his own mind that they were deluded creatures a very long way behind the times.

And this attitude had considerable effect upon Ennyman. There was evidence before his eyes of a man who by hard, straightforward work had built up for himself a prominent position and was able to go about and enjoy life, entertain his friends royally,

amuse himself when he wanted to at a theatre, concert, or any other entertainment, shoot, hunt, play games, and go for a holiday wherever he liked. He was obviously thriving and prosperous and carried with him an air of success which had its effect. Certainly Ennyman could not resist it.

Such a man as Sekuler Kulcher, said Frank Kritik, was a great detriment to Promyss and his plans, and must be seriously reckoned with.

Not nearly so damaging, but still harmful, was Scoff. Sekuler Kulcher, unless asked, said nothing against religion as he said nothing for it. He simply ignored it. It was a matter of pure indifference to him whether men did or did not go to church or attend meetings of the Zenith League. But Scoff openly derided the whole thing. According to him, Golden Promyss and his crew were a set of sanctimonious prigs. What business had they to set themselves above their fellows? How were they any better than the rest? He sneered at their talk of chastity. And made fun of their restraints. Men were made to be men, and women to be women. Why be prudish? Why not be natural? Precautions against consequences could always be taken. Let people have their natural enjoyment.

Then there was Croker, a gloomy gentleman, who delighted in foreseeing the worse. We lived in bad times and worse were coming. The people at Holm were an effete, decadent lot, and there was nothing to be done with them. Certainly showing pictures and acting plays would not affect them. All that was sheer waste of energy. Nothing less than a ruthless dictator who would force the people to work would be any good.

Vapid Worldling and Fikkel Kaprees were others

that Frank Kritik mentioned. They and others like them were shallow, empty-headed people who did not count much either one way or the other. They thought of little else than dress or dancing or playing cards. They were not bad and they were not good. Vera Love always contended that *no one* should be thought worthless. But he, Frank Kritik, found it hard to think so. He could see little use in such frivolous meagre-hearted, pale-blooded people. They seemed to have nothing in them—nothing to catch hold of—nothing to build up on. Vera Love would maintain that in everyone there is some tiny spark of the divine. But he himself could never see it. Personally he much preferred old Blak Enmytie who roundly and whole-heartedly denounced religion and all who professed it—including the Zenith League. And *he*, said Frank Kritik, was a man, with whom the Zenith League would have to reckon with the utmost gravity for he had great influence with working men.

He had plenty in him and was an able man in his way. But he was a wrong-headed fellow with his whole nature set askew. He always had a down on something or somebody. A down on his employers, a down on the Government, a down on religion. Religion was sheer poison. It drugged the people—sent them to sleep—took all the “go” out of them when they ought to be up and fighting for their rights. It enslaved the people. And the clergy were the worst enemies of the people, for they caught the children in the grip of religion and numbed their minds. Instead of teaching children to choose and reason for themselves, they destroyed children’s capacity for reasoning and taught them to accept things on authority and never question it, and be content with that state of life in which they were placed.

How could anyone believe in God? Had anyone *seen* Him? And how could anyone believe that God was good when there was so much injustice about? Men who had not done a hand's turn of work in their lives were rolling in riches. Others who had slaved away for years had hardly enough to keep body and soul together. If God could do anything and God was good why didn't He make the rich man work and give the working man enough to eat? No: it was idiotic to suppose that there was any invisible Being governing the world. The world went of itself and men had to look after themselves—not depend upon a God whom not a single soul had ever seen.

This was the kind of talk Blak Enmytie indulged in, said Frank Kritik, and he had the gift of talk and was much given to talk, and was now making a dead set at the League. He was a big burly man and he would hold forth to the men as they hung about after work. And his loud voice and confident manner had a great effect upon them. "You want bread," he would say, "well, if you sat still and did nothing would God bring it to you, or have you to work for it? Of course you have to work for it. There isn't any God to give it. Then why go to Church, or these League meetings, or believe in religion? Religion is a played-out game. We have to look after ourselves. We have no kind of obligation upon us either to Church or country. We must emancipate ourselves from all bonds. We must stand free and erect, be masters of ourselves and go our own way."

Blak Enmytie would talk in this way to the workmen. And he was no fool. He might be wrong-headed. But he had plenty of brains. And, in a way, he had a good heart. He did quite honestly believe that what he told the men was for their good. In teaching them

to revolt against all authority either ecclesiastical, or state, or business, he was convinced that he was showing them the way to a better state of things in the long run. And he had deeply studied his subject. His reading had not been wide. It had been narrowly restricted to one line. But on that line he had gone deep.

And all he read made him bitterly opposed to religion in general and Christianity in particular. Christianity in particular because it taught meekness and resignation when he wanted revolt; because it taught men to love their enemies and not resist evil when he wanted them to hate their enemies and fight with all their might against the evil system in which they were bound; and because it taught men not to care about the present life but to look for happiness in another life in another world whereas he wanted them to have a good time here in the present life: rich men had it, so why shouldn't the poor.

And he saw no need for religion as science answered better. When all could be explained by the law of cause and effect what need was there to introduce a God with a purpose? Every effect has its cause. A man takes off his coat because it is hot. He adds a great coat to his ordinary coat because it is cold. When all can be explained by this simple process of cause and effect why drag in a God?

Human affairs are not controlled by an outside God—an old man with a long beard sitting on a throne far out of sight up in the skies. They are controlled by men themselves. And what men have to see to is that they provide themselves with food and shelter and clothing. These are the things that matter—these material things—not things of the spirit. What's the good of singing hymns and preaching sermons and

listening to sermons if we have not enough to eat, or a coat to keep us warm, or a house to live in? And where would our minds be if we didn't look after our bodies? We injure our bodies and our minds cease to work. Our bodies therefore are what we have to look after. We must look after our bodies and our material needs and not be led astray trying to do the will of God when no God exists. Men must fight for higher wages and better houses and fight against those who would teach men to be content with what they have got and submit to the will of God.

"All this," said Frank Kritik, "preposterous as it sounds, appeals to working men. To them it seems only ordinary commonsense. Very few of them ever go to church, except for a funeral or a wedding. And they are much more affected by this kind of talk than they are by what they can remember of the religious teaching given them in the schools. Their lives are spent in earning a bare living for themselves and their families. And anyone who promises to help them do that more easily is naturally welcomed. Only a few would regard the clergy as the *enemies* of the people, as Blak Enmytie did. But many would look at the clergy and all who taught religion as hindrances and stumbling-blocks in their struggle for economic and political freedom. They wanted to be rid of all religious 'prejudices' and free to do as they liked."

This was the kind of feeling that Promyss was up against. And Frank Kritik said that his present methods would not meet it. Nor would they meet the kind of influence which Sekuler Kulcher excited, and which was in effect much more detrimental than Blak Enmytie's. For Kulcher was successful and people could see the results, whereas Enmytie had only theory to show.

To meet the position more extensive and more intensive work was needed. And Frank Kritik said he was going to speak to Promyss, Grace, Vera Love and Clere Lyte, put the situation squarely before them, and leave them to suggest new and expanded methods. He did not despair. He had confidence in the Zenith League. But he could see where it was inadequate. And he wanted to help by pointing out inadequacies.

This was the upshot of my conversation with him.

CHAPTER XV

SACRED DRAMA SOCIETY

APPARENTLY, at a meeting of the Zenith League, held soon after our conversation, Frank Kritik spoke out vigorously on much the same lines as he had followed in his talk with me. He reminded the League of their object. That was to make the people see the value of spiritual things, and the supreme value of the highest things, in the hope and expectation that if they were once convinced of their value they would pursue them as eagerly as they now pursued material wealth. They were to show forth the beauty of holiness, and with its beauty its value. They were to represent the kingdom of God. They were to induce men to set their affections on things above. Where their treasure was there would their hearts be also. And men would be set pursuing the kingdom of God with all their hearts.

This was the main object of the League. But were they fulfilling it? They were showing great devotion and had worked hard and had achieved a certain amount of success. But had they really done very much towards quickening the spiritual life of Holm? They had done much towards edifying the already elect. But towards imbuing the far more numerous inelect with a fervent love of holy things they had done practically nothing. Their efforts were not reaching those who most needed their ministrations. He did not suppose they would ever get hold of a downright opponent like Blak Enmytie. He was too case-hardened in his convictions. And such shallow-pates as Vapid Worldling and Fikkel Kaprees were

not worth getting hold of. But Ennyman was worth securing as he was a good fellow at heart and had something in him. And the way to get him was to get hold of Sekuler Kulcher. If the latter could be convinced that money was not everything in life, and could be led to see the superior value of spiritual things he might easily carry Ennyman with him, for Ennyman was at bottom quite disposed to make for the same ends as the League set themselves. Sekuler Kulcher was then the man to make for.

This blunt speaking deeply stirred the League leaders. They might well have resented it or felt wounded by it. But they took it from Frank Kritik because he was so genuinely with them. He was not merely disparaging their efforts like that confirmed grumbler Croker. He had a constructive end in view. So they lay his words to heart.

But one objection Vera Love made at once and most vehemently. She would not admit that Blak Enmytie or even such ineffectual creatures as Vapid Worldling were not worth getting hold of. Nothing would ever convince her that somewhere hidden in the most inimical and in the very shallowest was not a tiny spark of love for higher things which could not at some time in some way be fanned into flame. Only the right occasion and the right way were needed to kindle it. She would not despair even of these. Blak Enmytie said dreadfully blasphemous things about God, and stirred up a deal of bad feeling against every other class than his own. But for his own class he did have an entire devotion. He did not work for his own hand, or to make himself rich. He fought strenuously and bravely for what he conceived to be the good of his own fellow-working-man. And a man who had that much good in him was worth winning.

As for Vapid Worldling and Fikkel Kaprees they and their like had probably never known what it was to be stirred by a great emotion. They were ignorant of their own capacities. Stir them deeply and they would find to their astonishment how much more enjoyment there was to be had from spiritual things than they had ever imagined.

Grace said she saw now that they must use much more art in their representations. They must screw themselves up to a much higher pitch of perfection. They must make sterner demands upon themselves, enforce a stricter discipline, and aim at a much higher standard of production. Thus only could they make representations of the kingdom of God which would absolutely *compel* men to come in—which would act like a powerful magnet and draw everyone to see it and fill even Blak Enmytie with a sense of reverence, at least.

Faith was convinced that the way to reach men was to touch their spiritual side. What men in their hearts wanted was *more* spirituality. The more spirituality and the higher spirituality you gave them the more attracted they would be. It was a mistake to suppose that what they *most* wanted was money and luxury and material goods. They might think they did. But present them spiritual things in a way that they could understand and appreciate, and they would *leap* at them. He would not despair of reaching even Blak Enmytie. He was sure that if they continued as they were going but put still more spirituality into whatever they did they would succeed yet. And he was sure, too, that they had not yet developed their own powers to the full, or tapped to the full the spiritual resources of Holm. There was much more in them than had yet come out. And the greater the

call that was made upon their spiritual resources, and the more they exercised their spiritual faculties, the more ample would they find the resources and the more powerful the faculties.

Hope fully agreed and saw a great future for the League. They were only in their infancy—just learning to walk. There was the widest scope for them, and, as Faith had said, they had within them boundless capacities for good. What he would suggest was that they should aim at working on a much bigger scale so as to get at that larger proportion of the community which lay outside all church organisations. He would like to see them have a hall of their own, specially designed for their own purpose and entirely at their own disposal. This would, for one thing, give them an air of greater permanence. And, secondly, it would enable them to give their presentation, whether tableaux or plays, with much greater effect. This would be an expensive thing. But it would be justified and it was an object they must have in mind.

As a result of the meeting, the leaders decided to tighten up the Sacred Drama Society and make it a more efficient and effective instrument for attaining the ultimate end of the League. They must be saturated with the central purpose of the Society so that each actor in each of his activities and all together as a whole might serve it—and serve it with the highest pitch of efficiency. The Society had to make representations of the kingdom of God, showing forth the kingdom from many and varied points of view so as to bring its value home to many and varied kinds of people. And these representations must be such as would really reach the people, touch their hearts

and deeply move them—and move them to intense activity. They must provide something more than such an entertainment as would arouse a comfortable and pleasurable emotion for the moment. These plays must affect men's whole lives. The League would be content with nothing less than that.

But to affect the whole lives of their audience the actors themselves must be of the finest spirituality. They could not produce an impression of spirituality unless they themselves were spiritual to the core. The representation must come from the deepest souls of the actors. And unless the soul of each one was pure, holy, and untainted the whole impression would be marred. There must not be a single blot or blemish anywhere. This had been recognised from the first, but they must pay far more attention to the matter now.

The performance of a play must be looked on as a sacred function. The object being to stir religious emotion and convey religious truth to the masses in an intelligible way, the presentation of a play should be regarded as a high religious festival. Each actor should be filled with fervent religious ardour and profound sincerity. He must be true to more than *goodness*—he must be true to *holiness*.

Moreover, each must *act* to perfection. Artistic perfection in production no less than spirituality of feeling must be the aim. And artistic perfection in the presentation of a sacred drama could never be attained unless every detail was perfect. The perfection of the whole would be made up of perfection in each detail.

This was the standard that Grace had in her mind for the Sacred Drama Society. It would seem impossible of attainment yet she could not help having it

there before her as a criterion by which to judge her own work and the work of her little company.

And if they were to reach anywhere near this standard she saw that she must turn her company into a kind of religious order. The acting of these sacred dramas must be their religion. It must be their lives to them. All else must be subordinated. The most careful scrutiny would be exercised in selecting the members of her band of actors. And it would be laid down from the start that only those would be admitted who were prepared to lead a truly holy life with all the discipline and all the sacrifice that such a life involved. The task before them would be of the hardest possible. The venture of the very highest. And unless he or she was as ready as a mountain climber to submit to the strictest self-discipline membership could not be granted.

The Society would not live apart like some religious orders in a monastery or convent. But they would show as deep a devotion as any religious order to spreading the Good News, and would be as stern in their discipline. The members would be living the ordinary life like everyone else. They would be in and out among their fellows earning their livelihood, attending to the regular home duties, fulfilling all necessary social obligations. Far from living aloof from life they would be in the very midst of it, battling with its starkest realities. But while thus living in the heart of the world they would dedicate the inmost soul of themselves to this high task.

Jesus had said, Be ye perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect. And they would each strive to be perfect and form a perfect society which would be a model of the kingdom of God. They would put all their loyalty to God and loyalty to their country

and loyalty to themselves into loyalty to their society.

With this end in view Grace and Frank Kritik drew up the lines upon which they were to proceed in future. And their lines were so stringent that I must describe them at length.

First, each actor must steep himself in the spirit of the part he had to play, and must have the passion and the skill to express the idea that it was desired to impress upon the audience. He must enter into the soul of his rôle so as to achieve simplicity and power and be finished, rounded and natural, and consequently believed. The tone of voice, the bearing, every movement, every gesture, the whole nature of each actor must speak of the part he had to play. And each must strip himself bare of every slightest thing that was not essential for producing the main impression, both of his own part and of the whole play.

To achieve such perfection all must exercise heroic austerity and be sternly severe with themselves. They must train and discipline themselves as athletes have to for a race. Moreover, they must control their wills, and their tempers, and be ready to listen unflinchingly to the cruellest criticism of themselves—and to be their own severest critics. Nothing that any critic could say must be worse than what they would say of themselves. For they must play their part with the most perfect efficiency as well as passion. They had to persuade and not to stun. With all their energy they must have grace and delicacy and finish so as to produce a sharp, clear impression, bring a smile of satisfaction to the face of the audience and fill its soul with gladness.

Yet, concentrated as they must be for the time

being on their own particular art, and on their special part in it, they must also keep their general culture. They must learn to see and appreciate beauty in all its forms—go to Towne whenever possible and see good plays and good pictures and hear good concerts—learn to know what excellence is in every sphere. They must search for truth, too. And above all, keep in touch with the social life about them, take part in it, inhale it, imbibe all its goodness and love, and keep human.

In such ways should each actor be continually raising his intellectual and spiritual standard.

But actors are not a mere collection of individuals. They form a company. And they produce their effect by acting in concert. Therefore, they must not act to produce any individual effect for their own individual glorification. Each must utterly subordinate himself to the whole effect. He must absorb himself in the whole and let the whole absorb him.

Together they must act as a team and be instinct with the team-spirit. Then by exerting their best faculties to their fullest, by singleness of mind and purity of heart, and by unwavering loyalty to the common purpose they would create a common soul and rise to a higher form of life. In common they would have forced out of themselves what they could not achieve in separation.

And so that they might produce the strongest possible impression they must give unquestioning obedience to the producer—to Grace. And she must exercise over them a firm and resolute directive discipline. Her aim must be the highest excellence, for it is only quality that powerfully attracts. She must look into the soul of each actor so that she might understand each and each might understand her. And

each she must keep up to the mark and keep from lapsing into sloven mediocrity.

Long sustained, persistent effort would be required and methodical detailed training. A play might have to be studied and polished for months before being presented, first being read in common and discussed day after day, every member making his proposals and giving his opinions. Another six months might have to be spent in discussion of the leading parts, selected members trying to represent the characters in all possible situations. Eventually the various parts would be allotted to those most likely to act them effectively. And when all this joint preliminary work had been done the work on the stage would begin. Rehearsals would commence.

Then the time for the producer would have come. Not only the actors but the musicians, the scene painters, the costume-makers, the lighting operators would all come under Grace's direction. She would have to direct the actors in their elocution, their gestures, their positions, their costumes, and their general make-up.

Each rehearsal would be seriously discussed by all in common and the actors praised, or criticised and advised. The aim would be to bring the acting, the music and the scenery into harmony till all was whole and complete. The author of the play, the actors and the producer must be got to work in with one another to create one main impression. And that impression must be capable of penetrating so deeply that each member of the audience would seal it in his memory till it affected his whole life.

The collective result would then be a work of art, and show order and grace. The whole tone and atmosphere of the performance would be spiritual in the

highest degree, and be fragrant with the Spirit of God.

This might seem a counsel of perfection. But the leaders did not shrink from it. In art-loving countries companies of actors, such as the Habima, have actually achieved such perfection in the interests of art. How much more surely would those who were acting in the interests of religion succeed! They would be actuated by a higher motive. And if they gave to their work the same devotion that nuns gave to their convent duties perfection surely would be reached.

But the actors and producer would not have to bear the strain alone. They would be helped in their work by careful organisation outside. Zeele would make all the arrangements for the rehearsals, for getting the players and musicians together, for getting the costumes, stage properties, scenery, make-up, and for arranging for lighting. And others would see about advertising, issuing tickets and programmes, and getting an audience.

And the whole would be under the management of the Committee with Hope looking especially after the business side and Vera Love and Golden Promyss making sure that the true spirit of the League was maintained, and that the right plays were selected.

It would be their very special desire to carry the people of Holm with them, to gain their good-will, and to get them interested in the whole enterprise. The people must not be led to expect too much at first, only to see that the actors were in earnest, and meant to improve, and would improve, and that their improvement would be a real gain to Holm.

But they must establish such a reputation that

people would look forward as keenly to seeing a new performance as sportsmen look forward to seeing some big race, or theatre-goers some big play. People must look to it as a real re-creation and refreshment—something to lift them out of themselves, take their minds away from all worries of daily life, and send them back to work renewed in spirit, toned up and full of good-will towards men.

CHAPTER XVI

PLANNING THE MINSTER

FOR such acting a proper theatre would be required. Should they or should they not proceed on the great venture of building a home for themselves, as suggested by Hope? This was the momentous question now before the League. It would be a costly business; and if, after erecting their building it was but little frequented, it would be a disaster. Still, they could not make themselves fully effective without a building designed for their special purpose and always at their disposal; so the venture was worth making, Promyss urged.

He said that already the appetite for spiritual things had been whetted. And he was confident that there would be a still greater craving for them in future; and that there would be a demand from the people that this craving should be satisfied. In this respect it would be very like the present demand for luxury. People were demanding luxury in their homes, luxury in their food and drink, and luxury in the vehicles of travel. And for this luxury the rich would pay anything, and those who were not rich would run into debt rather than do without it. And Promyss foresaw the time when people would be just as insistent in their demand for spiritual luxury as they now were for bodily luxury. They would have it at all costs and would not mind what they paid for it.

He proposed, therefore, that they should proceed forthwith with the erection of a home for themselves. They should be prepared in advance for the coming

demand for spiritual luxury before it came too urgently upon them. Moreover, the sight of the supply would stimulate the demand.

Faith strongly supported Promyss. He acknowledged it was a risk. But he knew the people of Holm. It was a mistake to suppose that they cared *only* for light entertainment and only wanted to be amused. They liked to be merry, and it was a good thing that they did. Merriment cleared away a lot of ill-humour and noxious ailments. But there was also a deeper side which the people liked to have touched. The League—and especially the Sacred Drama side of it—already had touched that deeper part, and he was confident that before long there would be a perfect clamour among the people for that spiritual satisfaction the League was established for the express purpose of providing.

Hope cordially agreed that the time for carrying out his suggestion had come. And the others likewise agreeing on the main principle they fell to discussing the general plan of the proposed building.

It would be the home of the Zenith League and must be designed, therefore, for the single purpose of fulfilling the aims of the League. Within it must be so constructed that the League could carry out its various functions with the fullest efficiency. And its outward aspect should equally speak of spiritual purpose. Whether you viewed it from outside or whether you entered into it you should be inspired by a reverence for holy things. It should be perfection of its kind and a perfection to which each single part should be made to contribute. Every detail should tell of loving care and be instinct with beauty. The whole must tell of grace as well as durability. And it must look lasting as well as full of beauty.

Finally, it must occupy a central position in the place. It must be within the sight of all at all times. It must be near at hand for anyone to go into at any time. Morning, midday and evening it must be open. At all times it must afford a welcome.

Inside the main feature would, of course, be the theatre in which sacred dramas could be performed. Both in its construction and in its decoration this should be designed to combine the religious atmosphere of a church with the suitability for presenting plays. It should be like a church constructed for the production of plays, or as a theatre built like a church.

The next most important feature should be a library to contain books, magazines, newspapers, and publications of all kinds on religion, art, philosophy, and science in general (as distinguished from the more technical and detailed side). Then there should be a Committee Room in which meetings of the Truth Society could also be held; a Music room; an office; dressing rooms for actors; store room for stage properties; and so on.

These were the main features of the building they proposed. It would be costly and the financial part would have to be thoroughly thought out. But they were confident that they could raise a sufficiency of money (including promises of financial support) to proceed with such a plan, and that the remainder in full would be forthcoming as the work proceeded. Hope, at any rate, would guarantee the balance required if money did not come in as quickly as was expected, though he wanted every one in the place to have a share and interest in the building.

An architect would have to be called in to design the building. But Hope and his men, and volunteers

would carry out the actual building—and build it with all the love of the thing they could put into it.

The architect selected was a young man from Towne who was open to fresh ideas and was already beginning to make his mark. His name was Endevar. He—and also Seer—were invited to Holm to meet the Committee of the Zenith League and together they discussed the whole project.

Fitness to its purpose must be the sole consideration. And the purpose was to vitalise the spirituality of the place. There was in the souls of the people a longing for the really best things in life. That longing had to be expressed. And the proposed building should be so designed as to afford them adequate means of expressing that object. Everything about it, inside and out, each detail as well as the whole together, should contribute to that object.

The principal feature would have to be the theatre for the performance of sacred plays. And the point to bear in mind about this would be that it was not a theatre for the production of plays to entertain and amuse people, but for the production of plays which would move men to goodness and incline them to worship. They would want to create an intensely spiritual atmosphere in the theatre; and the plan, construction and decoration of it must all help them in carrying out that object. The theatre in itself must exert a spiritual influence. Directly people entered it they must feel themselves to be in a spiritual presence.

Another point was that the theatre they wanted was for the expression of their own ideas and for their own benefit. Actors should, therefore, have every facility for impressing their audience. The plays produced would be plays specially written for or by themselves. The actors would be chosen from among

themselves. And it was of central importance that the actors should be in a position to produce the fullest effect upon their audience. Audience and actors must be in as close touch as possible—not separated by a great gulf, as in the conventional theatre.

The architect caught the notion, and produced a plan which reminded me of the open-air acting I had seen in Hunza and Chitral on the Indian frontier. The people there are very fond of acting, and compose little plays of their own—of course without any written words, as they cannot read or write. And these plays are given on the village polo-ground. The spectators squat on the ground, or sit on the walls or stand along the sides and ends of the polo ground, and the players act in the middle. The point is that the play is performed in the midst of the audience.

In Endeavour's plan it was the same. The theatre had been designed on a circular plan—and the whole building was circular, with the library and other rooms in an outer circle round the theatre. Instead of the play being performed on a stage at one end of a building it would be performed in an arena and the audience would be on a floor sloping down towards it. The stage would be thus in the middle of the auditorium. The actors would be surrounded by the spectators and the spectators would have the actors close under them. Influence would, in this way, go straight from the one to the other. The spectators would hearten the actors, and the actors would appeal straight to the spectators. There would be no foot-lights to "get across." Players and audience would be at home together.

And in the auditorium there would be no seats, except a few raised seats on the outer rim for aged and infirm people. The rest would stand; and

children could squat on the ground on the ring of the arena. Through the floor tilting downwards towards the central place—the arena—where the play would be acted all would be able to see perfectly.

One section of the circle was reserved for the orchestra and for the entrance of the actors.

The roof was dome-shaped and of coloured glass—the centre sky-blue—with curtains to be drawn across it when the light was too glaring.

Provision was made for numerous sliding doors opening on to a corridor (lighted by a glass roof) running round the auditorium. The audience between the acts would thus be able rapidly to empty itself into the rooms across the corridor and people could then sit down and rest and talk about the play in between the acts.

Both from this arrangement of standing instead of sitting, and from meeting in between acts, there would be much more sociability. People would be able to move about freely and talk to one another. Besides which, more people could be got into the theatre. The audience would have a more natural appearance to the actors and would be better fitted to take their own share in the performance—for the audience as well as the actors had to play their part: they were there to worship actively not to be passively entertained.

In the outer circle of the building—separated from the theatre by a corridor—was the library, a committee room (to be used also for meetings of the Truth Society), a Music room, an office, dressing rooms for actors, store rooms, etc.

The circular outside walls of these were to be almost entirely window—some of it of stained glass. And these windows were of peculiarly graceful design.

So from the outside, this circular building, surmounted in the inner circle by a stained glass dome, with its exterior wall mostly window and glass doors would present a graceful as well as a durable appearance. And at night, when lights from within would show up the coloured glass, it would be a radiant object and have an attracting, welcoming effect.

And it would be raised on a grass-covered plinth which would form another concentric ring.

These plans were discussed at a general meeting of the whole League. The unusual position of the stage met with some criticism. Situated right in the middle like that it would be impossible to arrange "scenery," or to preserve the "illusion" of a play.

Endevur admitted that they would certainly lose in that respect. But he maintained that by his arrangement they would be better able to carry out their main object: they would be able to create the atmosphere they wanted. The actors would be in the closest possible touch with the audience—not separated from it, as they are in the conventional theatre.

And in this particular case the absence of facilities for scenery would not so much matter because the plays to be acted in this theatre would be of one kind: they would all be sacred plays. The theatre itself would be a sacred building and would be its own "scenery" so to speak. The whole interior could be adapted to the play.

"One other point," added Endevur, "I have had in mind the whole character of your Zenith League. You aspire to the highest so I am building you a dome of many-coloured glass which may—like life in the poem—stain the white radiance of eternity but which will

be open to it too : at will the central ring of the dome may be opened so that you may soar to the zenith when the spirit moves you.

“ But the sky-lark, your emblem, has his home on the ground and does his work on the ground. And you will be acting your plays not perched up on a stage but on a level with your audience. Christ said, The kingdom of God is within you. He also said, Wherever two or three of you are gathered together there will I be in the midst of you. So I have designed the theatre so that the actors will be within the audience—in the very midst of them. And the dwelling place of God will not be represented as far off at the remote end of the theatre, as in a Cathedral, and made inaccessible to the audience : it will be there in the middle of them.

“ Actors and audience will concentrate on a centre. On that central spot their attention will be focussed. And it will be immediately beneath the centre of the dome so that a line from the former to the latter will point to the zenith in the skies. The spot will be marked by a round of stained glass. It will be the very centre of all your activities. It will be a holy spot. And, further to mark it, I would suggest that a perpetual light should be made to shine through it.”

With minor adjustments to suit the requirements of the actors the plans were finally approved ; and the idea of the perpetual light adopted. And the architect was asked to make out a detailed estimate of cost. The Committee were very hopeful now that their object would be attained. The circular form of the theatre would favour concentration. Intense concentration of the audience uniting with intense concentration of the actors would form that living spirit in which the drama would be able to flow swiftly on-

ward. And a deeply religious spirit ought to pervade the whole production.

This design being decided, the question arose as to what the new building should be called. It was something more than a theatre, or a hall, or an institute. Drama House was suggested. The objection to that was that it was for something more than only drama.

Minster is the best translation of the term eventually adopted. It was to be called the Zenith Minster. In England the word Minster was originally used of secular churches, like York, Beverley and Ripon—all of them churches of secular canons. And Minster therefore seemed to be the best word to apply to the future home of the Zenith League.

Then the general public had to be consulted. Promyss wanted to interest the whole place in the project. He wanted to excite their local patriotism, their local esprit-de-corps, and get them to identify themselves with the idea and take a pride in the endeavour.

A public meeting was accordingly announced and Glad Ardour sent forth his corps of canvassers to persuade every one to come to it whether he belonged to the League or not. The scheme was something which affected the whole place and all should come to hear about it. If it succeeded it would bring honour to Holm and every one should help.

Hope was in the chair and he commenced the proceedings by inviting Vicker to offer a prayer for right guidance. He then shortly announced the object of the meeting, recapitulated what the League had already done, briefly outlined the scheme that was now in hand, and called upon Promyss to address the meeting.

Promyss, nervous and high strung as he invariably was before he had to make an important speech, once he was on his legs was full of self-confidence, thus giving the audience confidence in him and his words. And he spoke with an ease and grace and good humour, and with such unbounded assurance in the worth of his project, that his case—at first—seemed already won.

He appealed to them to realise the necessity of having in their midst a spiritual centre—a home for the soul in which all who cared for the things of the spirit could meet.

“Each of us,” he said, “feels at times a craving for what is fairest and best in life—for something above the mean and sordid things about us. We eagerly long for perfection. We long for those ineffable things of the spirit which are precious beyond all conception. In our best moments we long for the ‘holy, heavenly love, all other loves excelling’ of which we sing, and which is the very crown and summit of all things. And we would give anything—give the whole world—to have our longing satisfied.

“We all of us have this hunger in some measure and at some time. And a few have it so insistent upon them that they cannot rest until it is completely satisfied. Those of us in the Zenith League are among them. And our proposal is that such persons should have a permanent meeting place where we could come together and, by our sheer togetherness, and through the blessing of God, create those things we so much crave for. Each would have his own contribution—little or great—to make to the common stock. It may be only heart-felt applause, or a grateful handshake or a helpful piece of criticism. Or it may be a speech or a song which will thrill the souls of all. But,

little or great, great or little the contribution, it will go to creating that spirituality in the assembly as a whole which in its turn will help to awaken it in each.

“The proposed building will be dedicated to the express purpose, and no other, of awakening and cultivating this spirituality. It will be—like the church—a house of God—a sacred building—in which the living presence of God can make itself felt. It will command reverence. And the mere fact of our constantly meeting together in this sacred building to pursue a common object, and that object the highest conceivable, will continually be binding us closer together. No doubt we shall have our contentions. We shall have different points of view. And some will be wanting to press one thing, and some another. But rapt in the worship of The Highest we shall all be united: our souls will flame up together to God. The bonds of spiritual fellowship will bind us more and more firmly together. Christ will be in the midst of us. And we shall help to build up the kingdom of God upon earth.

“This is what we plan. And in our meetings we shall be able to throw aside for the time the cares and worries of life, and be transported to a realm of calm and heavenly beauty. That happiness will be ours which comes when the highest part of us has met its completest satisfaction and is content. And with that contentment in our hearts we shall be able to return refreshed to the stern but glorious battle of life.

“Hitherto, we have devoted much time to intellectual culture, much time also to scientific training, but little time or attention to spiritual culture. But the day is coming when it will be thought as uncouth to be without spiritual culture as it now is to be unable

to read or write, or to appreciate natural beauty. When that day comes may we at Holm be able to look back with pride upon having foreseen what was coming and upon having prepared ourselves to meet it."

I was present at the meeting and thought that this speech, delivered with such ease and confidence and good temper, would simply sweep the audience—or at least that only Blak Enmytie would oppose it. My forecast was wrong. Black Enmytie himself kept silent, for there was a side of him which could be deeply moved. But some of his usual followers made strident objection. And, from different reasons, confirmed church-goers were no less strenuously opposed to the scheme.

A raucous voice from the back of the hall wanted to know what was the use of having this new-fangled kind of theatre at all. Those who wanted religion could get it in the church. But a lot of people saw no use at all in religion. It was sheer waste of time. People who went to church had much better spend their time in honest work or in honest games out in the open air. Holm already had a church and a chapel. What did they want with a third place for religion? Why couldn't the money to be spent on this useless theatre be spent on something practical—something which would be of real use to Holm? Why couldn't it be used to build a nursing home for the poor sick? That would be something really worth building, and the poor and ill would be grateful for it. But another place for mere talking and singing was a senseless waste of money.

These sentiments were loudly cheered by a portion of the audience. And they also received some support from a quite different quarter—from certain regular

church-goers. These disagreed with the last speaker as to the uselessness of religion. But they were wholeheartedly with him in their objection to raising yet another religious edifice. They argued that the Church was there for spiritual purposes. People had better use *it* more rather than set up another building in opposition to it. The Church had been there for hundreds of years, and had been good enough for their forefathers. Why was it not good enough for them?

This view also had considerable support. And the tide seemed to be setting in strong against the proposal when up sprang Fervent Dezyre in a passion of excitement. The people at Holm *did* want religion, and did want to get it themselves, and did want a building of their own.

And as to whether they could not get all they wanted in the Church— No, they couldn't. They could get some of what they wanted there but not all. And anyhow they had to make what they wanted—not have it spoon-fed. They had to *make* holiness as they had to *make* beauty. And they wanted a special building to make it in. Drama was one of the best means of making holiness—as experience at Holm had shown. And for producing Drama a special building was required. Also special persons were required to produce it. The clergy could not be expected to do everything. The laity must take *their* part—and they meant to.

This checked the tide and it was sent rolling back by Vicker himself. He disagreed diametrically with his own church-goers. Whatever raised the standard of spirituality at Holm would be for the good, not the harm, of the Church. What he desired above everything was that men should seek God—should appreciate the value of holiness and mean to have it.

And whether they got it inside or outside the Church did not matter to him. The main thing was that they should get it. And if they got it for themselves and of their own initiative and exertion they would be more likely to value it and hang on tightly to it, than if they had it ladled out to them. And he had no doubt whatever that those who found holiness through the League would also come to Church. The two houses of God would not be in opposition to one another but would supplement each other. He wouldn't mind if there were a dozen. He would look upon his Church as more particularly representing the ancient order of things and the proposed Minster as giving expression to the newer order. The one represented permanence the other change. But the newer would be rooted in the old and would be continually drawing nourishment through its roots. And the older would be none the worse for branching out in newer variety of forms. Change always has to come about upon a permanent inner core. But a core which is permanent and never issues in changes of outward form is very dull and unattractive. He would gladly welcome the Minster as the best means of filling his own Church.

Faith followed, warmly thanking Vicker. He was confident that the Minster would be only another means of raising the life of Holm to a higher spiritual level. As orderliness now prevailed where in former times had been constant strife and broilings; and as love of beauty was now evident where before people were content with the mean and the sordid; so in the future would holiness become part of the very atmosphere of the place. The whole conditions of life at Holm would become more vivid and more spiritual. People would flock to Church. And they would thus

make a more spiritually alive congregation than the present. They would be more critical, it is true, and would make greater demands upon the clergy. But they would take a more lively part in the service. They would be more devout. They would pray with intenser fervour. And they would sing with greater zest. The Church would only benefit from the Lay Minster and its activities.

The Chairman, Hope, wound up the proceedings. He said the Minster would bring new life into Holm. A few years hence people would not know Holm for the same place. Care and dulness would be gone; and people would be going about as if they were children again. The Minster would be the soundest investment they could possibly make. Money so spent would be repaid a thousand-fold. He himself intended to invest largely in it. He was confident he would be repaid over and over again in the joy he would see produced at Holm. And after all what better thing could money bring.

As for the money being better spent on something practical, like a nursing home for the poor, sick people, he would remind those present of that old verse in the Bible—Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you. Seek and get holiness, which includes love and compassion, pity and mercy, and the money will be forthcoming soon enough for a nursing home. Acquire the *spirit* first—the spirit of compassion—and the money would follow. There was plenty of money at Holm which was spent on luxury, on amusement, on unnecessarily expensive games. Let the people be imbued with the Holy Spirit of mercy and compassion and money so spent would be diverted to a nursing home. And if the objectors to the Minster would

undertake to raise funds for a nursing home he would double whatever they raised.

This clinched the matter. The opposition entirely died down, and it was unanimously decided to proceed with the building of the Minster, and to set about collecting funds for that purpose.

CHAPTER XVII

GAINING SUPPORT

THE League was making a big new departure. The movement that Golden Promyss had started was clearly gathering momentum and I congratulated him on it. He had given a definite lead, and, as is the way with them, the people at Holm gladly followed. They are not easy to stir. But once they are aroused, and they see they are to be led in a direction they want to go in, they make good and loyal followers and will gallantly see their leader through every difficulty he has to encounter.

Big times were before the League. They were becoming a power in the place and were attracting notice in surrounding villages, and even in Towne. What Promyss told me he was at this stage most anxious about was getting the League as well established on the business side as it now was on the spiritual side. He wanted to make it a co-operative and self-supporting body which once fairly launched would carry on on its own steam. He wanted to have the business part managed by business men, like Hope, and the spiritual part managed by spiritual men and women, like Grace and Vera Love and himself. There would always be risk of trouble between the business side and the spiritual side. But that would have to be faced. He himself would probably be wanting to go further than the existing funds would justify. On the other hand, if the spiritual members did not press the business members money probably never would be forthcoming. And he would

trust to the tact and charm of Grace and Vera Love to keep warring elements in check.

Anyhow, he meant to work hard himself. They had something to go on now. The original members of the League were all persons of mark at Holm whose names carried weight and who staunchly supported the scheme. And in Faith and Hope he had men he could rely on in any crisis.

Seer, the writer-in-chief to the League, was invited to draw up an appeal for support. The result was a most moving document. In telling language it showed that the scheme was a sheer necessity for the League. It made people feel they were going about half-starved without it; and that to spend a single shilling on such sugary stuff as dress or entertainment while the Zenith League had real good stuff to offer was about as sensible as a starving man would be if he spent his last penny on sweets instead of bread.

At a meeting of the League this leaflet was read and explained till all had grasped the object. It was then decided that members should personally distribute copies of it all over Holm to make still better known what the League stood for and what had already been done, and what they proposed to do in future, and so collect subscriptions for the Minster and in support of every kind for the League.

Glad Ardour organised a corps of canvassers. Holm was divided up into sections and one canvasser told off to each section to make a house to house visit, distribute the leaflet and personally explain the object. *No one* was to be pressed for money, but *all* were to be most persuasively urged to attend the meetings.

A few—but very few—of these canvassers were received roughly and told not to be canting hypocrites setting themselves up above their neighbours, and

trying to "improve" other people. Some the canvassers would find very doubtful when first approached. They would foresee immense difficulties in the way—difficulties in continuing to get up plays which would attract; difficulties in getting up any profitable discussions at the Truth Society; difficulties in the way of raising funds for the Minster. It was too big a thing for a little place like Holm. The present enthusiasm would soon fizzle out. And they were far from sanguine of any permanent good resulting. There was quite enough being done already by the existing societies and there was no room for a new one.

But others, though not really much in sympathy with the aims and principles of the League, were at least ready to give it a chance and definitely promised to join it and support the scheme. And quite a fair number grasped the idea and enthusiastically welcomed it. They thought it would be a splendid thing for Holm, and they subscribed liberally. And among these were several promising recruits for the Sacred Drama Society.

And besides this general canvassing it had been decided that the opportunity might now be taken to get more at *individuals* in contradistinction to getting at people in the *mass*. So far they had depended mainly on appealing to people met together at their meetings and at the performances of the plays. Now they would appeal to the separate individual. Individual members of the League would make it their business to take a direct personal interest in particular individuals outside it with the object of getting them interested in the League and its work.

There was a danger here of the Leaguer appearing as the righteous person and the person he was interest-

ing himself being put in the light of the wicked outsider. That risk had to be run. It is no more than an artist has to take when he tries to persuade his fellows to see and admire and preserve the natural beauty around them. Those who have seen the great Light are of necessity bound to get their fellows to see it too.

Each member of the Committee was, accordingly, asked to approach some one. It was arranged that Promyss himself should speak to Sekuler Kulcher and that Blak Enmytie should be tackled by Vera Love. These were the two greatest obstacles in the way of the League's progress and they must be won over. In some way or other they must be shown that the League could help them to get what was most worth getting.

Biding his opportunity Promyss accosted Sekuler Kulcher as he was returning from business and spoke to him about the Minster they were proposing to build. They had had reasonable success so far with their sacred plays but the actors did not have a fair chance in an ordinary village hall, and they now wanted to erect a building exactly suited to their purposes. It would be a beautiful building—a real addition to the beauty of the place. And people would be able to get there what they in the League considered the very best things in life; and if any one could tell them of anything better they would have *that*. They were out to get the very best whatever it was.

Sekuler Kulcher listened very courteously, and read the leaflet Promyss had offered him, but replied quite definitely that he had no use for religion. It didn't appeal to him. And he did not approve of supporting what was obviously dying out. We had much better

let religion flicker out—not waste our breath in trying to blow it into life again. If he had not so much respect for Vicker personally he would say the same to him. How could any one place confidence in those who taught people that the world was created in six days, that the sun was stopped for a battle to go on, that a man lived for three days in the belly of a whale? And who believed in the Virgin Birth and bodily resurrection? Men who were bound to those beliefs were not worth listening to. You could not trust their intellectual honesty. He did not wish actively to oppose religion, but he certainly would not support, or countenance it in any way. On the other hand, he would gladly—and did—support science, for that achieved practical and useful results. Science was of untold benefit to mankind. But religion seemed only to soften and befog men.

Promyss said he would leave Vicker to defend himself and be sure he could put up a very good reply. For he must assuredly have convinced himself of the value of religion or he would not have entered the Ministry. A man of his ability and education might have done much better for himself materially in many other spheres. He would not have given up prospects of worldly comforts and devoted his life to religion unless he had firmly convinced himself of its value. And speaking for himself, Promyss said that he had spent many years in satisfying his own questionings, and he had come to the definite conclusion that he would find himself very much behind the times if he supported science as against religion and supposed that religion was going to be superseded. He wanted to be truly up to date and a little in advance of his times, and get on to what was really the best, so he supported religion—or rather both religion and

science, the two together, each supporting the other. And for this reason—that religion was concerned with what was going on in the deep down heart of things, and with the relation of the man as a whole to the universe as a whole; and not only in thought but in action. It was the most fundamental thing, and the most comprehensive and the highest.

Sekuler Kulcher was not convinced, but he did catch some enthusiasm from Promyss, and when Promyss said that he was not asking him for any financial support but would be really grateful if he would attend some of the meetings of the Truth Society and the performances of some of the sacred plays and judge for himself, he began to waver. "I will think it over," he said. "If you would only do that," Promyss assured him, "you would soon see that the time was coming when it would be thought as barbarous not to cultivate religion as it now is not to cultivate art and love of natural beauty."

"Very well," said Kulcher, "I will come to a Truth Society meeting anyhow, though I am very busy and it is hard to find time. There must be something in it or you yourself would not be so earnest about it."

The next meeting of the Truth Society happened to be one at which a paper on "The Structure of the Universe" was to be read by a scientific man. He showed how the universe, both as a whole and in every minutest part, was a mechanism. Each tiny atom was a marvellous piece of mechanism; the simplest microscopic forms of life were still more marvellous mechanisms. The marvel of the mechanism of the human body and the human brain was past all belief. The stars also were mechanisms. And stars and human beings and simplest forms of life and atoms were all

bound up together in one gigantic piece of mechanism—the whole universe.

Sekuler Kulcher was delighted at the description. It accorded well with his own view. But he was still more struck when Clere Lyte in criticising the paper showed that while they must accept all that science told them in this respect, and admire the vastness and intricacy and ingenuity of the mechanism, yet they must not stop there: they must not suppose that the universe was a mechanism and nothing *more*.

The material universe was certainly a mechanism. But it was a mechanism which evolved. And you cannot have an evolving mechanism unless you also presuppose ideas evolving in a mind behind the mechanism and dominating it. The proper inference to draw from the undoubted fact that the world is a mechanism is not that there is no mind behind the universe but that there *must* be a mind behind it and dominating it. And the more delicate and intricate and complex the mechanism and the more highly it evolves, the more wonderful must be that mind.

From the perfection of the mechanism we must not infer the *absence* of a directive mind: we must infer its *presence*.

Back of all must be a Supreme Self dominating and directing the whole world-process. Over and above the machine must be spirit, genius, the Divine. That is the beauty and *significance* of the undoubted *fact* that the universe is a mechanism.

Sekuler Kulcher was taken aback. Clere Lyte was a thinker and talked sense. For the first time in his life he began to doubt the *all-sufficiency* of science. There might, after all, be something behind science. He thanked Promyss for having brought him to the meeting and said he would like to come again when

a good paper was being discussed. He was a thoughtful man—though hitherto he had not thought beyond the immediate results of science.

To Vera Love now fell the more difficult task of capturing Blak Enmytie. The League had no intention of attacking him; but they did intend to take the initiative—to go out to him and try to win him over. With this in view Vera Love first made herself thoroughly acquainted with his standpoint and with his personal character. She found that at bottom he felt himself suffering under a grievance. He was aware of his own capacity, but he believed it did not get its full reward. There were the rich, and the sons of the rich, idle and useless and yet able to live in luxury; while he who really had capacity and really did work could barely earn a living. This was his root grievance. And others in a like predicament felt like him, and when he spoke he felt he was voicing their feelings as well as his own. And he would like to stir all his fellow-workers to feel the same. It was a crying iniquity that the few rich who did no work should have all the enjoyments of life while the many who did all the work should have scant reward.

And the reason why he was so bitter against *religion* was that it taught men to submit meekly to the existing order of things. Religion was organised, and the organised body, the Church, joined with the State in upholding this iniquitous condition of things. So religion had to be fought. The workers must not let themselves be lulled into acquiescence: they must be stirred into action.

He was often violent and offensive in the expression of this point of view. He never doubted that he was all right and that those he denounced were all wrong.

And he believed in action as well as words. The workers should join together and deprive the rich of the riches they had no right to have. He would give the rich no quarter till they had been made poor. Against them he had the bitterest hatred. But for his fellow-workers he had the warmest fellow-feeling. Not one of them ever doubted that he was fighting for his class and not for his own personal profit. All the energy and thought and time he put into pleading the cause of the workers would not bring him in the smallest money gain. He lived the simplest life and never desired to live anything else. And the workers worshipped him for so unselfishly championing their cause.

This was the man whom Vera Love had to win and she meant to make the most of this best part in him. She approached him as he was returning from a working man's meeting, and spoke to him about what had been said there. She agreed with him that it was hard that the rich should enjoy so much and the poor have so little. She agreed, too, that the working men must work out their own salvation. What she doubted was whether it was wise to waste so much breath in denouncing the rich and stirring up hatred against them. Hatred never did effect any useful object. It unnecessarily antagonised the hated and wasted the energy of the haters. Also it beclouded judgment, and heated men when they ought to be cooled. Hatred was bad policy. Moreover, all this hatred implied envy. But *were* the rich to be envied? Her experience was that the rich were *not* to be envied. A big income did not mean big happiness. The richest people were not the happiest people. They did not get the most out of life or enjoy it most. Often they were extremely miserable, bored and dis-

satisfied. The rich had as much cause for envying the poor as the poor had for envying the rich. It seemed hard on the poor to be *forced* to work. In actual experience it worked out that through being made to work, and so to exercise their faculties, they did get more real enjoyment out of life than the rich got. That was why the poor had the wonderful fellow-feeling, and compassion for one another, and stood by one another so faithfully, and were so patient and considerate, and any social gathering of the poor was so much more cheerful an affair than the dull entertainments of the rich.

And then Vera Love came to her point. She told Blak Enmytie that she thought him wrong in urging the satisfaction of *material* needs, as the *most* important thing in life. Of course men must have food and clothing and shelter. But these material things were not what they most wanted. They most wanted spiritual things, like love and affection and the capacity for enjoying beautiful things—the beauties of nature, good music and so on. And even for gaining their livelihood men needed *spirit*. To earn their food and clothing and shelter they needed courage and determination and the capacity for working with other men—all things of the spirit. Spiritual things were, therefore, far more fundamentally important than material things. Certainly we could not live without eating. Still more certainly we could never earn our food unless we had the skill and determination to get it. The all-important point, therefore, was to cultivate the spirit. With a strong and refined spirit—with a spirit of good-will—we could get all the food and raiment and housing we needed and real enjoyment of life in addition. So would he not come to some of the Zenith League's meetings—the whole

object of which was to cultivate the spirit—and see some good plays and hear some good singing?

All this she said in her persuasive way and with the courage of a lion, for she knew how rabid he was on his theories and how violent he could be. But she had been wise enough to tackle him when some of his natural force had been abated at the end of a meeting and he had emptied himself of most of his vehemence. And what counted much with him was her own life. It was known to all at Holm. He knew that she was not preaching what she did not practice. She did not live in actual grinding poverty. There was no reason why she should. But she did live a perfectly simple life. She always had a kindly word for people. And she did give herself up to this work of the spirit.

He told her downright that he hated and despised religion. But something in her voice and manner had struck something deep down in him. And, after thus maintaining his own position to his own satisfaction, he went on to say that he liked good singing; good singing did no harm to any one; he had heard they had splendid singing at her meetings so he would like to come to one and listen to it. This was all Vera Love expected or wanted for the moment. She shook hands with him with a grateful look as if he had—as indeed he had—conferred on her a precious blessing. And he went his way strangely moved.

A very womanly woman had appealed to a really manly man. And something hard had been melted within him. And he did not feel quite sure whether he ought to stiffen himself pitilessly against it or let himself give way to it. Should he harden himself against the least softening influence which might weaken him in his work? Or would this new stirring

not *weaken* but, as Vera Love had said, actually strengthen him in his work? He could not yet decide. For the moment all he need trouble himself about was that he had promised Vera Love to go to one of these meetings to hear the singing. This surely could not weaken him. And if it did he could always get up and go.

Promyss also approached his former employer, Manew Fakchurer. The latter was not in the habit of contributing to much outside his own business. He spent lavishly on his workpeople. He stinted nothing there. And nothing was too good for them. He built beautiful cottages for them, erected and filled a little gem of an art gallery, built a library for them, and got up entertainments and sports and games of all kinds. But for objects beyond this he was not inclined to give.

The case of the Zenith League was different though. Promyss was one of his own men. And he was providing something Manew Fakchurer with all his generosity had not yet thought of. And the great employer had always felt in his heart that something was lacking in what he was doing for his work folk. He had provided for their bodily comfort, for their physical enjoyment, for their intellectual development, and even for their love of art. Still, at times, a feeling would come upon him that with all he was doing one thing still was lacking. He had not provided for the soul.

And this feeling came to a head when Promyss approached him for support for the Minster. The idea appealed to him. His workpeople should be able to get there the very thing he now acutely felt he was most wanting for them. And as he did things

in a big way if he did them at all he offered to give ten shillings for every pound collected.

Things were getting on now. And, besides gifts in cash people were offering gifts in kind, or their personal services. Tradesmen, seeing that the Minster would be good for the place, offered materials at cost price—wood, bricks, windowframes and so on. Bricklayers and masons offered to work an hour a day for nothing. Women offered to work curtains, cushions and any sort of decoration. A bank clerk offered to keep the accounts. And so on—every one lending a hand. And entertainments were given by the Drama Society and the Musical Society as another means of raising funds.

In all these ways—in cash, in kind, in service—ample provision was eventually forthcoming for building the Minster; and the whole place had been compelled to take interest in the Zenith League.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE MINSTER

Now that sufficient funds had been collected work on the Minster could proceed forthwith. Hope was in charge of the building operations, and put himself and all his establishment at the disposal of the League, only charging out-of-pocket expenses. Volunteer stone-masons, bricklayers, and carpenters gave an hour or two a day in their spare time. A women's committee under Grace's leadership attended to the internal decoration and furnishing. Everyone put his heart and his back into the work. And while the general design determined on by the League as a whole was followed yet all the scope possible was left for individuals to show their individuality in the details of the work. The windows, the doors, the furniture, the interior decoration of each room, were all different. There was nothing of the scaled-pattern about the Minster, and not more than could be helped of the machine-made. It showed at once the loving care of individuals as well as their combined purpose.

A site had been chosen in the centre of Holm. A few unimportant houses had been cleared away and ample room secured for the erection of the Minster. It was built in keeping with the character of the place of local stone and of oak from the neighbouring woods. It rose from a lawn extending right up to the walls. And the lawn itself was set in a frame of herbaceous borders extending along the walls which enclosed the site on three sides, while the fourth was wide open to the street.

The Minster itself was, as we have seen, a circular building culminating in a glass dome over the central portion. The stone of which it was built was of a creamy white. The windows were of exquisite tracery. The whole was raised on a grassy plinth. And with the framework of flowers on three sides it had an appearance of delicate yet enduring loveliness. It was not a building which thrust itself upon you and spoke of magnificence and wealth. It was one on which the eye loved to dwell. It was like an exquisite flower growing out of the lawn.

Passing by a paved way across the lawn and up a small flight of steps to the top of the plinth one entered the building through a double door of tracery in oak, with a glass background admitting light to the building and giving the impression that people also were welcome and not barred out. A passage led straight through to the corridor which encircled the theatre, and from the passage a door on each side opened—the one on to the Library and the other on to the Music Room.

The corridor served as a vestibule before entering the inner sanctuary itself. Here one would pause and collect one's thoughts. On its walls hung reproductions of the best pictures portraying scenes from the life of Christ—reproductions which would in time make way for original pictures. The subjects were Isaiah foretelling the coming of the Messiah; the birth of Jesus in a manger; Jesus as a boy in the Temple; John the Baptist preaching repentance in the wilderness; the Baptism of Jesus by the Holy Ghost; Jesus teaching in the synagogue; Jesus teaching on the mountain side; the marriage feast at Cana; disputing with the scribes and Pharisees; the arraignment of Jesus; the sentence; the Crucifixion; Jesus

in the midst of his followers; the Day of Pentecost; St. Paul spreading the message in Athens and Rome.

All these pictures were on the inner wall of the corridor. Opposite them, on the outer wall, were pictures of the saints and martyrs in every country and down to the present time.

The floor of the corridor was of parquet oak. Light came from a glass-roof. The walls were of oak paneling gradually to be beautifully carved. And carved oak doors led from this corridor on the one side into the Music Room, the Library, the Committee room, the office, the actors' rooms, cloak rooms and a refreshment room, and on to the other side into the theatre.

And the theatre was of course the great feature of the whole building. The eye at once went to the beautiful dome of many coloured glass but principally of sky blue. It was then caught by the perpetual light glowing on the floor immediately beneath the centre. The Divine spark within—the inward light—was responding to the radiance from above.

The walls and the raised seats running immediately under them were of oak lightened to almost a creamy hue. And here also, when there was time for it to be done, there would be carving of the finest workmanship.

Except those round the walls for the old and infirm, there were no seats in the theatre, and the floor sloped gradually down to the actors' arena in a succession of low shallow steps just wide enough for people to stand on, and just high enough to permit of the people in rear seeing over the heads of the people in front. Opposite the central entrance from the corridor was the platform for the orchestra, and entrances for the actors.

Here in the arena, in the very midst of the spectators, the sacred dramas would be performed. And so much thought and loving care had been put into the construction and decoration of the theatre that already a hallowed air was beginning to settle on it.

At the request of the Committee of the League the opening ceremony was performed by Vicker who therein dedicated the Minster to the service of God. A great gathering of people assembled on the village green and a procession was then formed—Vicker leading, followed first by Faith and Hope, then by Grace and Vera Love, and Clere Lyte, after them, in pairs, by Ernest Interest and Fervent Dezyre, Gay Kurridge and Glad Ardour, Mother Devoshun and Flaming Zeele, Lily Innocence and Eager Aspiration. Then came the other members, first of the Sacred Drama Society, and then of the Truth Society. The end of the procession was made up of little children. And last of all came Golden Promyss.

Ahead of the procession marched a band formed of members of the Musical Society, and as it proceeded to the Minster, stirring hymns were sung by the whole body. A little child opened the doors of the Minster by just pressing against them—so easily were they hinged. The procession then made its way all round the building finishing in the theatre where the orchestra played while the people assembled.

Vicker then addressed the meeting saying he looked upon the Minster as the child born out of the Church, and as such gave it his blessing, and prayed that the two might ever work together in the service of God. The little ceremony ended with the singing of the National Anthem. And the procession was then reformed, but this time with Golden Promyss leading and the children following him.

He led them out into the street and gave to each a little badge to take to his home. It represented the rays of the rising sun, and each child was to be a ray of the dawn that was now breaking over the country.

That evening, and for the three following evenings, a performance was given by the Drama Society of a sacred play. The Truth Society afterwards began a new series of meetings, and people were now readily taking part in the discussions. And these engendered a desire for the books in the library. The latest books, magazines and pamphlets on the religious and philosophic thought of the day were to be found there. And they could be taken away on loan. Those who could afford to pay were expected to subscribe. But those who could not were always allowed to obtain what books or magazines they wanted. And a feature of the library was that it had a kind of shop window facing on to the street with the latest books exposed as an attraction. And inside, some member of the League would be present inviting the attention of visitors to the books. Community singing was also practised on two or three evenings in the week in the Music Room where there was a small organ; and sacred concerts were given.

As the people of Holm gradually warmed up the Minster became a truly living institution. Especially of an autumn or winter evening people liked to go there. Either in the addresses and discussions or in the community singing or in browsing among the books and talking about them they would find true spiritual food for their souls. And they would be sure to come upon friends and people of a like way of thinking, so that it became a happy social meeting place.

And in the course of time there developed about the theatre as the inner sanctum of the Minster an atmosphere of what is best described as *worshipfulness*. It was frequented by people of high intent. They were bent on getting the best and loveliest things in life. And as they came to see more and more in the world to admire—more to admire in the beauties of nature, in the marvellous mechanism of the world and every smallest detail of it, in the personalities of great men, of great religious leaders, and most of all of Christ—as they saw so much to admire and as they became increasingly capable of appreciating what was most *worth* admiring so did this spirit of *worship* develop in them. They were stirred by the wonder and beauty and the infinite mystery of the world. And they caught from the work of the League that spirit which inclined them to bow down and worship the Fount and Source of what was so wonderful and good.

And this that was being done in the Minster did not draw people from the Church. People could worship in the Church as they could never worship in the Minster. They therefore thronged to the Church. But they brought into it a sincerer feeling. They were a more spiritually-educated congregation. They made greater demands. But they brought more life.

The Minster did not tend to supplant the Church. As had been desired, it re-inforced the older body. The two were complementary the one of the other.

CHAPTER XIX

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRIST

GOLDEN PROMYSS felt he could now safely embark on a venture he had long cherished. He wanted to have the story of Jesus told as a whole in a single drama. But he wanted it told from a new point of view, not from *our* point of view, nor from *Christ's*, but from *God's*. The idea was to show how the great tragedy must appear to God. Had God really forsaken Jesus on the Cross? Jesus had to endure terrible sufferings, not for doing evil but for doing good. Had good in fact resulted from those sufferings?

Promyss and Seer worked out a drama together. The scene was set on the planet Celestia of the imaginary star Stella—a star invisible to the naked eye and so distant that light travelling from it at the rate of 186,000 miles a second took a thousand years to reach this planet. It was nothing like the furthest star from us. But it was the Holiest Sanctuary of the Universe, and for that reason chosen as the scene of the play.

In it resided living beings in every stage of bodily, mental and spiritual development attainable in the universe. Among these were a choice few, a little inner circle of rare spirits, who had reached complete world-consciousness. That is to say, they were aware not only of themselves, but of the universe in its wholeness. They retained their own individuality but at the same time they were directly and intimately in touch with the Spirit which animates the whole universe. They would feel it thrilling through them and

working in them and they were conscious of giving expression to it, carrying out its purpose, doing its will, in much the same way as a patriotic Pole would feel himself imbued with the spirit of Poland and express it and carry it out.

And these world-conscious, or God-conscious beings, of Celestia, had a strong sense of kinship with kindred spirits, all over the universe. They had the power of fellow-feeling at a distance developed in high intensity. They could feel with other fellow-beings on other planets however distant. They were of a more spiritual mould than men on this Earth are and could exchange thought without the use of either tongue or ears. Impressions and messages emanating from one mind were carried direct to them however distant—carried on vibrations of that ether in which the whole universe is immersed.

Just as certain persons here have received communication telepathically from other persons and just as we receive broadcast messages by means of vibrations of the ether, and the very soul of a singer or a preacher may be thus conveyed to us, so were these Celestials, as the inhabitants of the planet Celestia were called, able to know of and feel what was happening in Palestine nineteen hundred years ago.

And so wonderful a tragedy was it that the Celestials had decided to represent it in the form of a drama. It interested them particularly because it showed their faculty of God-consciousness in the actual process of dawning upon the people of another planet. It was as if they were watching the actual emergence of a butterfly from a chrysalis.

The Celestials knew that the planet we call the Earth sprang from the star we call the Sun and that living beings were born out of the Earth. They knew

that though these living beings were thus born out of the Sun, and though the light of the Sun was pouring in on them all their lives it was not for millions of years that they developed eyes and could enjoy all the glories that light brings. The Celestials knew that when at last those highest beings whom we call men appeared on the Earth it was many hundreds of thousands of years before even a few of them became dimly conscious of that Spirit which animates the whole universe, stars, sun, planets and all that is on them—Celestials and men and beasts alike, though certainly not in the same degree. But now there was a great stirring in men. The vitally interesting moment was arriving when they would be as vividly conscious of the love of God as they now were of the light of the sun. And it was this mighty happening that the Celestial dramatist was to portray.

Seer caught the idea from Golden Promyss. He put himself in the place of the Celestial dramatist and wrote a play for a Celestial audience. And this was the play which the Sacred Drama Society were now to produce in the Minster at Holm.

It was a bold venture. But Promyss believed that it would put the story of Jesus in its true perspective and in its right light, and show the life of Jesus to be of mightier consequence to the human race than had so far been declared.

In the first Act of this Celestial play there is depicted one of those periodic stirrings of the Spirit of the World which take place on the planet Earth as elsewhere in the universe. Incalculable mysterious forces of tremendous potency are seen swaying men. They are filled with a sense of dissatisfaction with themselves, and are swept with a passion of repentance for their sins and shortcomings. From great

deeps within them surge up longings for better things, and they are dimly aware that better times are to be.

These stirrings are shown to be sometimes in art, sometimes in science and philosophy, sometimes in religion; and to occur sometimes in one part of the Earth, sometimes in another. But always in some part and in some direction they are sure to be at work revealing the working of that unconquerable power, the Holy Spirit of God. And God fulfils Himself in many ways—on the Earth as well as among the stars.

Suddenly there is a great upheaval and the hidden spiritual energies find a vent. Men have awakened to spiritual realities. There had been earnest expectation. And now one appears who sums up in himself what men are longing for, and interprets their inmost needs. In him all their highest aspirations are brought to a focus. He has caught the meaning and purpose of the stirring. And if the stirring is a religious upheaval he is possessed by the Holy Spirit and feels himself to be the Spirit's agent, and messenger and interpreter, sent to lift men on to the higher level towards which they have been groping. He feels the Divine Will working within him. He keeps his own individuality. He is not a mere mechanical instrument: he is a true agent. But he speaks with the authentic voice of God, and men recognise his authority.

Such stirrings of the spirit in the field of art and thought had occurred in Greece, culminating in Phidias and Plato; and in the field of religion in India, culminating in the Buddha; and among the people of Israel giving rise to the prophets Moses, Isaiah and others. And now, when the present drama opens, there is another and far greater stirring amongst these highly spiritual Hebrews.

They had for years been filled with the idea that one day a Messiah would appear who would establish the kingdom of God—that a mighty personage would arise who would bring about a state of things in which the righteousness and peace that the people of Israel, for long centuries and through all their wanderings and sufferings had yearned for, would prevail. And they had been full of this high expectancy when now a wonderful stirring was observed among them. It was as if something was seething within them and bursting to emerge into the light—as if the Holy Spirit were pressing up within them and could contain itself no longer. The promised kingdom of God was evidently at hand. It might come about any day. At any moment the Messiah might appear. And one like the prophets of old did, indeed, appear, urging men to repentance—urging men to cleanse themselves of all sin and be prepared for the great day. But he preached saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.

And at the very time that this prophesy was being made a mightier than he was actually living. He was of the humblest parentage. His father was a carpenter. And he himself had been born in a manger because there was no room in the inn. But he had been born in a lovely country of mountain and valley, of lake and river, of glorious sunshine and beautiful flowers. And he was by nature disposed to enjoy spiritual things.

When only twelve his parents had lost him for three days and then found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him had been astonished at his understanding and answers.

He had immersed himself in all the sacred writings of his people. He had saturated himself with their spirit. He had sung the national hymns. He had been filled with that great expectancy which was everywhere round him. Better, greater, holier times must surely be coming. The kingdom of God must most certainly be at hand. The eagerly hoped for Messiah must be at the very point of appearing.

Full of this expectancy Jesus had gone from Nazareth to Galilee, and been baptised of John in Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, he now sees the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him; and there comes a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. As a dove flutters her wings over her young so did the Holy Spirit hover over him.

So the wonderful stirring within mankind has at length burst its bonds. What was seething in the souls of men has burst out into the light; and the light now comes pouring in. In Jesus is focussed and consummated all that men had been vaguely striving after. The upward push of the spirit within men had responded to the pressure of the spirit from without. As living beings on the earth, in response to the stimulus of rays from the physical sun, had developed physical eyes, so now, in response to the spiritual stimulus from the Soul of the universe, one man has at last developed eyes of the soul.

Jesus has won spiritual vision. He can see the glory of God. He is God-conscious. He is filled with the Spirit of God. He is one with God. And now he knows for sure that the inmost nature of God is love. And as we are bathed in the light of the sun so is he now flooded with the love of God. God is his Father and he and his Father are one. Yet he is not God.

God is greater than he—immeasurably greater. Only being filled with the spirit of God he can see what God wants done, and can do it.

Jesus knows now in his secret heart that he is the expected Messiah. And he knows too that the kingdom of God which men had been so looking forward to is the reign of Love. He himself is radiant with this heavenly love; and if only all men could be got to feel as he now feels the kingdom of God would instantly come.

He must now tell men of his experience. In some fashion he must communicate to them what he had felt. He must touch their hearts till they are filled like his own. He must make them love the Lord their God with all their heart, and with all their soul, and with all their mind, and with all their strength; and love their neighbour as themselves. He must open the eyes of their souls till they see the great glory of God.

So he goes into Galilee preaching the good news, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel. And he goes into Capernaum: and straightway on the sabbath day he enters into the synagogue and teaches. And they are astonished at his doctrine; for he teaches them as one that has authority and not as the scribes.

He has indeed been transformed in his baptism by the Holy Ghost. He has a spiritual power that no man had possessed before—a new spiritual quality and a new charm. There is a spell behind his words—a tone in his voice, a light in his eyes, a virtue going out from him—which drives his words home, melts the hearts of men, and compels them to him. The Scribes base themselves wholly on the scriptures. He speaks just what comes freely from his heart. And his heart is full of God. He speaks thus the words of God

and with the authority and power of God. And everywhere he insists on the spirit as against the letter. Men are to cleanse their hearts and not their garments. The pure in heart will be blessed for they shall see God. If the inside is pure men will see holy things.

And he preaches in the synagogues throughout all Galilee. And he goes about all the cities and villages, teaching in the synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

And men follow him gladly. And he forms a little band of disciples to help him spread the good news and explains to them what the new state of things—the kingdom of God—will be like.

He calls a little child unto him and sets him in the midst of them, and says, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

And when his disciples rebuke people for bringing young children to him, that he should touch them, he is much displeased, and says unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God. Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.

This is the Good News he has to give men—that God is like a loving Father and the kingdom of God is made of men with the hearts of little children. And the simple folk receive it gladly.

So ends the first Act.

In the second Act a great change occurs. So far all has been sunny. Now all is gloom. The people had received him but the custodians of the sacred law

are angered against him. He is for the spirit: they are for the letter. And if he attracts some men he arouses others to violent opposition.

When his disciples on the sabbath day are hungered, and begin to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat—which the Pharisees say is not lawful to do upon the Sabbath day; and when Jesus, again on the sabbath day, heals a man with a withered hand, the Pharisees go out, and hold a council against him, how they may destroy him.

On another occasion there come to Jesus scribes and Pharisees which are of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.

And Jesus, on his part, finding the scribes and Pharisees a stumbling block in his way inveighs vehemently against them. For the weak and suffering he has unfathomable compassion. For the Pharisees who stand by the letter and ignore the spirit he has the fiercest scorn. For, laying aside the commandment of God they hold the tradition of men and make the word of God of none effect through their tradition.

He looks round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts.

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees,” he exclaims, “for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.”

He accuses them of suppressing the spirit. They accuse him of breaking the traditions.

But these offences against the traditions of the law are as nothing in their eyes compared with his profanity in believing he is the Messiah.

Jesus has come to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and, as his custom is, he goes into the

synagogue on the sabbath day, and stands up for to read. And there is delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esias. And when he has opened the book, he finds the place where it is written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closes the book, and gives it to the minister, and sits down, saying:

This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

They are bold words to say in his own native village. And the people say, Is not this Joseph's son? And he says, Verily, I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country. Only a widow accepted Elias; and many lepers there were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.

And all they in the synagogue, when they hear these things, are filled with wrath, and rise up, and thrust him out of the city, and lead him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city is built, that they may cast him down headlong. But he passing through the midst of them goes his way.

On another occasion when Jesus tells them that what he is doing is God, his Father, working in him; the Jews seek the more to kill him, because he not only has broken the sabbath, but says also that God is his Father, making himself equal with God.

Later when he goes to Jerusalem and is come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people come unto him as he is teaching, and say, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? And the Pharisees take

counsel how they may entangle him in his talk. And they seek to lay hold of him, but fear the people.

Then assemble together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who is called Caiaphas, and consult that they may take Jesus by subtlety, and kill him. And enters Satan unto Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve disciples. And he goes his way, and communes with the chief priests and captains, how he may betray him unto them. And they are glad, and covenant to give him money. And he promises, and seeks opportunity to betray Jesus unto them in the absence of the multitude.

And Jesus goes forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where is a garden, into which he enters and his disciples. And Judas, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh hither with lanterns and torches and weapons. And Jesus says unto them, Whom seek ye? They answer him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he.

As soon as he had said unto them, I am he, they go backward and fall to the ground. (So great an awe does he inspire.)

Then asks he them again, Whom seek ye? And they say, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answers, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let them go their way.

Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews take Jesus, and bind him, and lead him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders are assembled.

And the high priest says unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the son of God. And Jesus says, I am.

Then the high priest rends his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy : what further need have we of witnesses ? What think ye ? They answer and say, He is guilty of death. Then do they spit in his face and buffet him ; and others smite him with the palms of their hands.

And when the morning is come, all the chief priests and elders of the people take counsel against Jesus to put him to death ; and when they have bound him, they lead him away and deliver him to Pontius Pilate the Governor. And they begin to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar saying that he himself is Christ a King. And they are the more fierce saying, He stirreth up the people. And they cry, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. But Pilate says unto them, Why, what evil hath he done ? I have found no cause of death in him : I will therefore chastise him, and let him go. And they are insistent with loud voices requiring that he may be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevail. And Pilate gives sentence that it shall be as they require.

And the soldiers lead him away and clothe him with purple, and plait a crown of thorns and put it about his head, and begin to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews ! And they smite him on the head with a reed, and do spit upon him, and bowing their knees worship him. And when they have mocked him they take off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and lead him out to crucify him.

And with him they crucify two thieves. And they that pass by rail on him. Likewise the chief priests mocking say among themselves, with the scribes, He saved others : himself he cannot save. And they that are crucified with him revile him.

And at the ninth hour Jesus cries with a loud voice, My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?

And, when he has cried again with a loud voice, he yields up the ghost.

So ends Act II. of the Celestial drama.

The scene of the third Act is laid a thousand years later.

(The Celestials will not know for a thousand years yet what is happening on our planet at the present day, for at the present day in Celestia they are only hearing of what happened here a thousand years ago.)

A vast change has occurred in that thousand years since the birth of Christ. The humble carpenter who was born in a manger, who was scorned by the priests, despised, rejected, mocked, spat upon, scourged and crucified is now adored as divine by hundreds of millions of people. He is made the pattern for their lives. They model themselves on him and make it their highest aim to be even faintly like him.

And the little band of simple folk whom he trained as his disciples has now grown into a mighty organisation. The centre is at Rome, the seat of that Power to whom Jesus in his life time was subject. It rules even the kings of the earth. It has its branches in every country of Europe. Even to the distant isles of Britain and Ireland its sway extends. And eastward bearers of Christ's message have penetrated to India and China.

How this has come about the Celestial dramatist now portrays.

Jesus had been rejected and crucified. His body had been done to death. But his spirit had lived on. It had lived on firstly in the souls of his immediate disciples. By the very cruelty of his death his Spirit

had received a point and emphasis it had never had when he was physically with them. His daring in venturing to Jerusalem, the seat of his most powerful antagonists, the courage he had displayed when threatened with arrest, his calm and dignity under trial—all these were now added to that awesome spell which attracted some as violently as it repelled others. And he was now felt to be a man not only of the gentlest love but of penetrating power. He was *in* them—working in them—more than he ever had been when he was alive. And they could now see him somewhat as he really was. He was more truly real to them. And that love of God, that consciousness of the near presence of God, that realisation that God was love, which he had so ardently desired to communicate to them they at last felt.

When Jesus was still with them he had said to his disciples, “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.”

And when one of the disciples had asked, “How is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not unto the world?” Jesus had answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him.

And Jesus had added, These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things,

and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

And now, as Jesus had promised, so, after his death, the Comforter had come to them. He had said, The kingdom of God is within you. And there they were to find it.

For when the day of Pentecost was fully come, and they were all with one accord in one place, suddenly there had come a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it had filled all the house where they were sitting, till they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.

And Peter standing up with the eleven had lifted up his voice, and said, This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel ; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh : and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.

The disciples and other followers of Jesus had continued to spread the good news of God's Redeeming Love. They had been persecuted as Jesus had been. Saul had made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women had committed them to prison. Breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, he had gone into the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

But as he journeyed and had come near Damascus ; suddenly there had shone round about him a light from heaven ; and he had fallen to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why per-

secutest thou me? And he had said, Who are thou, Lord? And the Lord had said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. And Saul had been blind for three days. Then one Ananias putting his hands on him had said, Brother Saul, the Lord even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there had fallen from his eyes as it had been scales; and he had received sight forthwith, and had arisen and been baptised. And straightway he had preached Christ in the synagogues, that he was the son of God.

And Saul, now called Paul, had gone forth to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, and he had come to Athens and stood in the midst of Mars hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions I found an altar with the inscription "To the Unknown God." Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God hath made the world and all things therein, and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being.

Returning to Jerusalem he had been made a prisoner and sent to Rome, where he had dwelt two whole years in his own hired house preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then from Galilee, from Jerusalem, from Athens, from Rome the spirit had spread to Africa—to Egypt and Ethiopia; to Asia—to India and China; and all over Europe. Bearers of the gospel had been perse-

cuted. A thousand years later they were still being persecuted. And through every intervening age it had been likewise. Yet more and more had been filled with the Holy Spirit. The scales had fallen from their eyes. Spiritual vision had come to them—and, with the vision a great gladness which would not let them rest content till they had communicated it to all about them.

This is how it had come to pass that the Jesus who had begun life as a humble artisan in a subject country, and who had ended it deserted by his followers, rejected, despised, and tortured on the Cross, was now honoured and revered above every other by the greatest Sovereigns, the finest intellects, and the devoutest souls in every land.

So ends the Celestial Drama.

At the close of the play a Celestial character comes forward and, after the manner of a Greek chorus, soliloquises upon it:—

We here on Celestia can see that God—their God on Earth and our God on Celestia, the same common God of the whole universe—had not forsaken Jesus upon the Cross. Through the very manner of his death Jesus—and God through him—was able to achieve what his heart was most set on. And this might not have been possible in any lesser way.

God, in His wisdom, grants a measure of freedom to nations as to individuals. The Jewish nation had freedom to do wrong or right—to choose the lower or the higher good. But they had not the eyes to see the higher. They had taken the lower for it. In their eyes Jesus had sinned against God. He had disregarded the nation and thought only of individuals. He had incited the people to ignore the letter of the sacred law. He had declared himself the son of God. He had thus

offended the Majesty of God. He had disobeyed His holy word. And for such sacrilege he had been worthy of death.

We Celestials, at this distance of time and space, can see that the chiefs and elders were wrong : they had chosen the lesser through not recognising the higher good. Yet, at least, they were honestly striving to preserve their precious nation intact. They would pass on their holy heritage unspoilt. They were the chosen people of God. They must preserve themselves a people. Nay more : in all strictness they must keep each man among them to each letter of the sacred law confided to them of God.

Wrong they may have been in showing such ruth towards one who stood for the individual soul. At least they believed they were acting in accord with the will of God. And it was their very reverence for God and regard for His chosen nation that had led them to condemn Jesus. And they were not wrong in upholding the integrity of their exalted nation.

How then could they have better carried out the will of God ? How should other nations, profiting by their experience, carry out His Will ? Would they not have been wiser to keep Jesus as the Messiah within the nation, and through him turn the whole nation into a *Messianic* nation ? There could then have been all the regard for individuals, whether they were Jews or Gentiles, that Jesus commanded. But, in addition, the whole Jewish nation would have been preserved for its historic mission.

Freedom has to be within the law, and it is hard to know where the law ends and freedom begins. But freedom there has to be as well as law. And the chiefs and elders might have recognised this. Through the Messiah they might have made the whole nation

into a Messianic nation with a Messianic mission to the world.

And when we Celestials sum up the deep impressions of this poignant drama does not Jesus stand out clear as the means that God was using to bring on Earth, as here on Celestia, that consciousness of Himself that we ourselves have? We ourselves are quickly sensitive to the Spirit of God and are just as aware of Him as we are of ourselves. Our souls' eyes are just as open to the glory of God as our bodily eyes are to the light of Stella, or men's bodily eyes are to the light of the Sun. This God-Light we take as perfectly natural among us. And may not God have been using Jesus as a means to bring about the same end upon Earth?

At one time Earth was bare and sterile. There was nothing but land and water—no vegetation whatever. Then slowly green things began to appear and much of the surface became clothed in green. Then more colours appeared. In addition to the green came reds and blues and yellows and every combination of these. And later still came men with eyes to see the beauty that lay in these colours.

So now is it with this new quality of holiness which through Jesus has begun to appear on Earth. It is spreading among men as colour spread among the plants. And more and more men are arising with eyes to see its beauty.

This is evidently the work that God through Jesus has been accomplishing on Earth. God's spirit has been seething in the souls of men. It has been melting men, sweetening men, till they have been sensitive enough to feel Its glory. The same things as were there before are there now. Men are related to one another and to the world about them the same as

before. But through Jesus God has put a new Spirit into men. He has infused them with the spirit of the whole universe. And that spirit—that spirit of Love—they are putting more and more into every relationship of life and into all that they do.

This is the great work of Jesus. It is for this that he dared. And it was for this that he gladly gave his life.

And it is only a beginning. Now the break through has been made, the new spirit will spread. It is everywhere opposed, as the higher always is by the lower. But in its very nature it is contagious. Men cannot help catching it. And slowly it will, like colour, cover this earth.

These men of the planet Earth we only know through their spirits. Their bodily forms must be as different from ours as here on Celestia our own bodily forms are different from lower forms of life about us. But the essential spirit of men must be the same as ours. They, as we, derive from the same great Spirit of the Universe. They, like we, must be made in the image of God. They, like we, must have the Divine spark in each one of them. And they, in their turn, must attain to that same knowledge of God and close communion with Him that we have, and, like us, become as vividly aware of God as they are of themselves.

Holiness will assuredly prevail on the Earth even as here on Celestia.

This was the play which Seer wrote to express the ideas which Golden Promyss had in mind. It was produced by Grace. And the new theatre of the Minster was admirably adapted for the purpose, the inner round of the dome being removed for the occasion so

that the stars could be seen shining through the opening, and spectators catch the day-spring from on high.

The actors were apparelled in flowing silken dresses of creamy white and azure blue and gold. And the front rows of the audience also were dressed in similar, though less costly, garments to represent a meeting in Celestia.

Actors and audience alike thus gained an impression of how terrestrial happenings must appear to inhabitants of the stars. And the main impression produced was recognition of the central importance of Christ. His life was the paramount event in the history of the Earth. No other event had had such momentous consequence for the future of its inhabitants.

PART III
MATURITY

CHAPTER XX

NATURE FÊTES

THIS last and other plays the Sacred Drama Society had been giving for some time now; the Musical Society had been active, too; and from constantly working together and putting their whole hearts into their tasks the members had formed among themselves a firm sense of comradeship and were having a strong influence on Holm. The Zenith League had become a compact body, and was a force in the place.

But now Frank Kritik again broke in with his outspoken judgment upon them. Once more he reminded them of their main object. It was to hasten the kingdom of God at Holm. The kingdom was on its way no doubt; but too slowly: it must be hastened. They must quicken their pace. And they must stretch out further. They were not yet reaching that outer fringe. Many they had got who before had not been touched by religion. But they had not yet reached even a quarter of the people of Holm. They must not be content with what they were now doing. They must devise some means of being still more effective.

Promyss took the point. They were getting too complacent. They had done much. But they must do more. They must get at that outer fringe. And this must be done in two ways. They must systematically tackle individuals, as they did when raising funds for the Minster. And they must sally forth from their stronghold in the Minster and go out into the byways and hedges and compel men to come in.

Vera Love was much more in her element in this personal persuasion work than in the more public side of the League's activities. And she and a little company were, therefore, deputed to take charge of the personal campaign. The capture of *individual* souls was to be their aim. And in their activities Vera Love and her fellow-workers would be aided by the prestige the Zenith League had now won. And they would have something attractive—the plays, the music, the discussions—to offer as inducements to outsiders. It would not now be all such uphill work as it had been at the start.

The new plan was thoroughly discussed at a Committee meeting and Vera Love, Golden Promyss, Glad Ardour, Mother Devoshun, Happy Daring, Percy Veerance, and a few others were definitely commissioned to set forth on this campaign to bring in individuals.

Again Blak Enmytie was told off for Vera Love. And she was glad enough to have to tackle him. For inwardly she had a strong liking for him: there was something in him that was *worth* getting hold of.

She would not *argue* with him. That was not her strong point. Nor was he likely to be influenced by cold reasoning. He was much more swayed by sentiment than he knew. And instinct told her that it would be through sentiment that she would carry him. But how? And when?

These were questions she was constantly putting to herself. She would not force the pace. She would bide her opportunity. But she would have her object constantly in mind, be ever on the watch, and be ready to seize the opportunity ere it flashed past her.

At her first interview with him he had said that he

liked singing. And he had attended one or two of the concerts at first, but latterly had shied off them. Why was this? Vera Love must find out. She must not let him loose. She must follow up the first advantage.

At a gathering commemorative of those who had fallen in the war, she said to him that she had not noticed him at any of their recent concerts, and asked him when he was coming again. And there in the throng where there were people all round but no one listening and a man could say much that he would shrink from saying in private he said he *feared* to come to the singing.

"I'll tell you point-blank," he said. "I'm *afraid* of that singing and the sacred music. It softens and weakens me. And I have to keep myself hard for my job. I'm out to fight our oppressors and I can't afford to be sentimental. I have to strike hard. And I have to receive hard blows. I require what will strengthen me. I must avoid what softens me. I want to be capable of hitting harder not weakened. If I and my mates weaken we shall only be more oppressed. That is why I do not go any more to that singing. And that is why I fight religion. They are both of them *softening* things."

What could Vera Love do? She seemed to be up against a stone wall. And she had to *move* that wall. She had to carry it along with her. Faith could move mountains she knew. She also knew it was not so easily done.

The solution of her difficulty came in a flash. He wanted to be strengthened. She would strengthen him. He wanted to overcome his oppressors. She would remove the oppression.

She asked him straight "Can you trust me? Can

you trust me to do for you what will double and treble your strength and what will weaken your oppressors?"

"I know you mean well by us," he said, "but you don't *know*. You are not one of us. You don't know how we hate the rich and resent their domination. And we have to fight them without mercy."

"You're not answering my question," she replied. "Will you trust me? I may not know as much as I ought to about you and other working men. But I'm a mother, and mothers know much. I do know a good deal about life. And I want to help you, and may be *able* to help you. Will you give me a chance? Will you trust me to this extent that if I ask you to do something you will at least *consider* my appeal? You know that my friends and I would not willingly do anything to harm you. Our whole object is to have people working together on good terms with one another. And if we think we can do something which will help you to gain your ends, and if I make an appeal to you will you listen to me?"

"Very well. I will not *guarantee* to do what you ask me. That will depend upon what you ask. But at any rate I will *listen*."

This was as far as Vera Love would venture for the present. She had kept up touch with him. That was one good point. And she meant to follow this up by getting him to come to a suitable play, and there let him see that deep and true religious sentiment had in it nothing relaxing and enervating but only what adds force and competence to what is planned by thought. He was fearing the softening effects of religion and music. She would show him that while they refined they strengthened. They gave to iron the temper of steel.

Promyss had the easier task of persuading Sekuler Kulcher to support the Zenith League more actively. The latter had been a good deal struck by the paper he had heard read and discussed at the meeting of the Truth Society. It had given him pause. He was not so cock-sure as he used to be that science had the final say. But the intellect was not yet dethroned from its domination over his soul. He still thought more of science than anything else. He had not risen above facts to see their inner significance.

This Golden Promyss wanted to show him. And he did not despair, for Sekuler Kulcher was a man of education, a man of wide experience, and a man who thought. True, he was not the kind of man who would bleed for a cause, and fight and strive for it with his whole heart and soul. He was not made that way. But two things about him Promyss remembered. Into his *business* he *could* put his whole self. And during the war he *had* played up. He was too old to fight but he had put his business capacity and training at his country's service and done valuable work in organising food supplies.

Upon this Promyss would build. Meeting Sekuler Kulcher one day in the street he begged him to come to a performance of one of the sacred plays. "I know they are not much in your line," said Promyss, "and that you have little time to spare. And our performances are poor in comparison with what you see in Towne. But your presence would be a great encouragement to us in the Zenith League. We have been working hard to produce something first-class. We want to get people to come and see what we are doing. And, if you come, numbers of others would come too."

"You want me to mislead people, then," replied

Sekuler Kulcher—though half in jest. “You know I regard religion as played out and now you want me to lead others into its trap!”

“I do,” acknowledged Promyss. “You did not regret coming to that Truth Society meetings. You heard something there worth thinking about. I guarantee you it will be the same with the Drama Society. You will be glad you came. And if others who come because you come do not also enjoy it, that is their lookout, not yours. Anyhow we shall be to blame, not you.”

“Very well, send me a notice when there is something good on and I will run the risk.”

Vapid Worldling had now to be won over; and this was less satisfactory in every way. There was little of him to catch hold of. What was to be caught seemed little worth the catching. However, Vera Love insisted that the effort must be made. Not a single human being must be left out. She could not bear to feel that even the most empty and useless was spurned. In each one there was *something* worth stirring. And she begged Glad Ardour to take on Vapid Worldling and instil a particle of his own enthusiasm into him.

Ardour, ever ready to be helpful to the cause, got hold of Worldling at a dance and urged him to come one evening to the Minster. There was always something there worth hearing—music, a play, or a discussion. Worldling replied that what went on there might suit some people but it would not suit him. He wanted to enjoy himself—not to be improved. Games and dances and cards were quite good enough for him. There was no harm in them. And they were all he wanted. He was quite happy as he was. He

didn't interfere with other people and he wouldn't let other people interfere with him.

"But what about it if you can get *more* enjoyment at the Minster than you can here," said Ardour. "You seem to think that goodness is necessarily depressing and that to be made good is to be made dull. But, for all you know at present, your cards and sports and dances may be wretchedly dull, insipid affairs compared with what you could get at the Minster. You know plenty of the one form of happiness—nothing of the other."

"I allow I haven't been to the Minster myself," said Worldling, "but I've asked fellows who have and they say it's very boring."

"That must have been because they only went once," argued Ardour. "The Minster is an acquired taste. If you sip it, certainly it is nasty. You have to take a good mouthful or you don't get the taste. But once you have got it, it is the other things that are so tasteless. Why not come to some of our concerts and plays. They would be a change anyhow. It must be very dull for you going on the same everlasting round. Take a little variety."

Fikkel Kaprees was tackled in much the same way. She had far more in her than Worldling. She was for ever flying off at a tangent, and was so volatile that no one knew what she would be at next. But what she did get on to for the moment she put her whole heart into. And, if only she were wiser in her choice and could keep her heart where she once put it, both she and her friends would have had a happier time than they did. As it was, no one could depend upon her. Vera Love ached to get hold of her. It was so sad to see the poor thing fluttering ineffectually about. But Vera knew that the only thing was for

her to be caught up in some big strong emotion that would lift her right out of herself. She would then "find" herself. And through finding herself she would be steadied. So, as soon as the Dramatic Society had a play on which was likely to grip her, Vera Love would get her to it.

Other girls were approached by Mother Devoshun. And, through one or other member of the League, numbers who had so far never been near the Minster were persuaded to come and see what went on there.

The ordinary quiet church-going folk were not pressed. Only notices of performances were sent to them. They had their own means of spiritual satisfaction; and what the Zenith League was mainly concerned with was the mass of people who never attended church.

Contemporaneously with this sweeping in of individuals, plans were being made for arousing the people as a whole. Besides sitting in their beautiful Minster and expecting people to come to them the Zenith League were determined to go out into the village and stir the people there—and go out, not as separate individuals, but as a body.

Promyss's idea was to organise processions. They wanted to produce a big, strong effect upon every single person in the place. The way to do this was by processions. They would organise a series of processions to march through the place with banners flying, bands playing, and people singing.

He was a believer in ceremonial. A ceremony expressed an idea. Each participant in a ceremony contributed to the effect of the whole, and had to fit himself into his particular place, as each stone in the Minster. And all together made up an effect which

could not be produced by any of them singly or by all of them together if they went about as a mob and were not disposed in appropriate places.

They wanted to arouse Holm at large to the value of spiritual things. The procession should be organised to fulfil that object. It should attract both the eye and the ear of everyone at Holm.

To attract the eye the procession should be large and well-proportioned, prominent figures should be given real prominence; striking costumes should be worn; and banners should be carried.

And to attract the ear a band should head the procession, and songs should be sung by those taking part in it.

This was the general idea. And to carry it out a series of Nature Fêtes was arranged when processions would be formed to proceed from the Minster into the country round. The people of Holm were to be roused to go out into the woods and meadows and hedgerows and *look* at the birds and the flowers, the sky and the clouds—really look at them and mark how all declared the glory of God and showed forth His handiwork.

The first was Primrose Fête. It took place on a Saturday in full spring when the primroses were out in profusion. Handbills announcing it had been distributed beforehand by Flaming Zeele and his canvassers; and notices had been posted throughout the village. All who wished to join in the procession were bidden to assemble at the Minster at 10 a.m. bringing with them food and baskets.

There Grace told them that they were to go out into the country and pick primroses and bring them to the Church to decorate it for Sunday. Little primrose-yellow cotton frocks and caps made up by the

League were provided for the children, and green cotton frocks and caps for the mothers and girls.

The procession was then formed by Glad Ardour. Promyss, dressed in azure blue, led it carrying the silken sky blue banner of the Zenith League on which was emblazoned its emblem, the sky-lark, and its motto "The Highest."

Following him was Flaming Zeele carrying the banner of the day. It was symbolical of spring. Out of brown representing the earth there emerged the green leaves of plants and the yellow of many primroses, and over all was the blue of the sky.

These two were followed by boys with bugles and drums. Then came the children and after them the women. The rear was to be brought up by any that Glad Ardour and his henchmen could induce to join in as the procession made its way through the village.

As the word was given to move off the boys blew their bugles lustily and beat their drums, and people rushed to the windows and doors to see what was happening. And the more people came to look the prouder grew the boys, and the more lustily did they blow their bugles and beat their drums. Then the bugles were given a rest and the drums alone were played. Then they too were given a rest and the children and women sang songs that they had often practised in the community singing in the Minster.

A great stir was made in the village. Numbers joined in behind and took up the songs which had now become well-known at Holm. And when the singers were tired the bugles and drums were played again.

So the procession marched cheerily along through the village and out into the woods. It was a glorious

spring day with the first touch of warmth in the air. The trees were in their freshest flush of green. And the birds were singing their hearts out.

When a wood crammed with primroses was reached the procession halted and broke up, and gathered round Grace who had mounted a fallen tree to say a few words to them before they began gathering the flowers.

“We are going to gather primroses,” she said, “but I beg you not to pull up roots—only pick the flowers. And do not throw any away. Put them all in your baskets and we will take them to the Church to decorate it in the service of God, and to our homes to make them beautiful, too.

“So be dainty with these flowers. They are God’s own handiwork, and through them we know God. If they are so pure and tender and sweet the God who created them must be sweet and tender too. Look deep into them and see all the beauty—see how delicate their texture, how lovely their colour, how simple their form. Love their beauty and you will be loving God. And soon you will find God loving you for loving them.

“And then think of their courage! Think how these delicate flowers push their way through the damp earth. However hard the frost, or deep the snow, or much the rain, when spring comes round the primroses appear. Nothing daunts them—neither cold, nor wet, nor mud. Year by year, without fail, they appear—fresh and lovely as ever.

“In the time of our grandfathers and far, far back before them it was the same. At every spring-time, however severe the winter, up came the primroses. And in the time of our grandchildren and long, long after them it will be the same, too.

“So treasure the dear little flowers—so faithful, true, and courageous. Throw none away. And when summer is over we will come here again and gather the seeds and sow them to border our gardens. But the plants which have grown out here all these years we will leave to grow out here still and bear us fresh flowers every spring as long as we live.”

With these words the children were sent off into the woods. They rushed about from plant to plant eagerly filling their baskets and shouting and laughing as they gathered the flowers. When they had picked enough they were called together and ate their dinners. And in the early afternoon they returned, as they came, in procession, drumming and bugling and singing. Marching up to the Church they placed the baskets of primroses in long rows at the altar rail where they were received by Vicker and dedicated to the Service of God. After all the flowers had been thus dedicated each child took its own little handful to brighten its own home. Vicker then dismissed them with his blessing and thanks and they went off to their homes, while some of the women remained to decorate the Church for the morrow.

Similar Nature Fêtes were held on Violet Day and Blue-Bell Day in the spring, and on Rose Day in the summer. On each day the children and mothers went out in procession with banners and bugles and drums. Always the sky-blue banner of the League was borne at the head. But for the flower of the day a special banner was carried behind it. And the children and women wore purple or blue or pink frocks.

Both in the spring and in the summer there was also a special Bird Day; and a bird-lover was brought to show them birds' ways. Especially did she dwell on their own emblem, the sky-lark, showing them its

nest on the ground, telling them how careful the birds were of their home, and making them watch the larks as they soared and never ceased in their song as they winged their way heavenward.

The song of all the different birds she would make them note too, and distinguish the one from the other and remark how every bird sang from sheer joy in existence, and delight in the spring, and pride in its mate.

And the bird-lover joyed in getting the children to share her own love of the birds—of their lovely colouring and the grace of their form and their flight, their sweet ways, too—their deftness in building their nests, their devotion to each other, their love of their young ones, and the courage with which they would preserve them from danger. And she would tell of their habits and which of them remained at home and which of them came from abroad, and where they wintered afar; and of the hardships they had to endure and the struggle for food and the vigilance needed to keep safe from destruction by others who wished to turn them into food for themselves; and yet the keen zest and joy in life that they showed.

She herself rejoiced with the birds in their rapture of flight and of song and longed to get every child to share her delight.

And indeed they got near it. They watched with wonder how she could imitate their calls and often attract them to her; how she could see nests so safely tucked away that even their sharp eyes had failed to detect them; how fond she was of each one and how careful not to alarm it. And from her they caught a like love of birds and went home singing and happy. And one more joy had been found which would last them all through their lives.

Another Nature Fête which was held in the height of summer was on what was called Dependence Day. It was meant to show how all things are bound up together and dependent on one another, and in the end on God.

The usual procession was formed; and with music and singing they marched off to a common. And there a naturalist showed them from the trees and flowers and birds and animals and insects around them how all living things were related with one another and with the earth and the air and the sunshine. He showed how man was dependent on the animals and plants for his food, and his clothing; on the earth for his house; on the air for his breath; on the sun for his health. He showed too, how every animal, with no single exception, depended on plants for its life; and how the plants, in like fashion, depended on the soil and the air and the rain and the sunshine. The interdependence of flowers and insects he also pointed out—how a flower relied on some insect to bring it the pollen it needed and how it offered its nectar in payment for service.

The keen struggle for life, with competition severest between those of same kin, he without shrinking pointed out. But the sweet mutual aid, the devotion of mates and of parents for offspring, and the help that animals unwittingly give one another he also declared.

All, by his showing, would thus be dependent the one on the other, and all be bound up together in one infinite whole.

Then he would show how all, in the end, must depend on that Power which was holding all things together and directing their course—some Mighty

Spiritual Power whose nature and purpose we could best tell by noting Its highest creations.

Thus all depended on God; and God's purpose we must look for in Christ.

This was the teaching inculcated on Dependence Day.

In the autumn a Harvest Day was celebrated when, with the farmers' leave, the children gleaned the fields and took the offerings to the Church. The farmers' faith in trusting their seed to the earth had been justified. Plentiful or poor the harvest, yet many-fold more than had been sown had been reaped. And thanksgiving to God was only mete and right.

On Harvest Day the children also scoured the fields and the woods and the hedgerows for seeds of wild flowers to sow in their gardens—primroses, violets or anything else that might possibly grow and add beauty to home.

Their last Nature Fête for the year was somewhat unusual. It was a Star Night. Instead of setting forth by day they marched out in procession by night to admire the glory of the stars. Starting at twilight in the dry, clear, autumn time on a night when there was no moon and the stars could be clearly seen, and, with the sun absent as well, it was possible to feel more part of the whole starry universe, and less dominated by their own particular star, they proceeded to an open space on high ground. And there Clere Lyte addressed them.

"Note the stillness," he said, "and feel the steadiness of star life. All the world is hushed. Yet we seem to be in an intense Presence, stealing in upon us and

lifting us up to the stars. And remember what the naturalist told us, that we and all living things, both animal and plant, and the soil, and the rocks, and the waters, the air, the earth, and the sun, are all bound up together and dependent on one another. And now learn this, too, that the sun and all that sprang from it, and is bound up with it, and dependent on it, is linked up with every one of these myriads of stars. All of them—and we with them—form one tremendous whole with every part dependent on every other part, influencing and influenced by it; and all are dependent on that same Mighty Spiritual Power whose Presence we feel within us and around us here on earth.

“The starry universe we look up at now is vast beyond all power of imagination. For every star we see with our naked eye there are millions too faint to be seen at all—even with most powerful telescopes. The number is comparable to the number of grains of sand in the Sahara Desert. And their distances are so great that light from the nearest travelling at the rate of 186,000 miles a second takes four and a half years to reach here; while light from the farthest, yet known to us, travelling at the same fearful velocity, starting now would not reach us for another 140 million years.

“Yet distant as are these stars we *are* connected with them—connected presumably by the ether—for light *does* reach us from them borne on vibrations of this linking medium. And besides rays of light, cosmic rays also reach us from them.

“And all these innumerable stars are composed of the same materials as this earth is built up of—of still other materials, perhaps, but also of the same. And the same laws prevail there as here.

“And the time which the stars speak of is no less stupendous than the space. Stars are continually being born out of *nebulæ*, growing up, dissipating their energy and disappearing—their component particles eventually in the long process of time to be reborn in new stars, world without end. But the time which elapses between the first birth of a star and its final disappearance is so enormous that it has to be reckoned in millions of millions of years. The age of our earth, which is only a tiny droplet from the sun, may be two to four thousand million years. But the sun itself is about seven *million* million years old. And the total life of a star may be between one and two hundred million million years.

“Thus vast is the scale on which the universe is built. But we men must not be affrighted by mere size. As we gaze up at the stars and reflect on all that science tells us of the magnitude of the stellar world we must not let ourselves be overcome by contemplation of sheer material bulk. We must recall our manhood. As we look upward to the stars we can feel our souls becoming vast as they. Give rein to our spirit and it will aspire to the highest of them, and expand to their furthest stretch; and contemplation of the physical magnitude of the starry universe will only fill us with a sense of the spiritual greatness of that Power which sustains and animates the whole. God’s greatness, not our littleness, will be the dominant impression. And we will feel ourselves great for having God in us.”

Clere Lyte having finished his discourse, all wended their way homeward in twos and threes and singly, taking the opportunity to drink in the full influence of the stars and feel their own oneness with the universal life.

Thus ended the series of Nature Fêtes, and with the coming on of longer evenings the Zenith League turned its attention to indoor doings. They had made their effort to go out of the Minster and reach people who might never come into it. Now they would intensify their activities within it to make it still more attractive.

Especially would they devote themselves to the performance of Sacred Dramas.

CHAPTER XXI

SPONTANEOUS DRAMA

THE League was gathering momentum. It had caught on and was making a mark. "But," said Promyss to me, "it must go on from strength to strength. It must never be still. To stop is to stagnate. In spiritual things there must always be *advance*. Repose there may be while spiritual forces are gathering within. But repose only to spring higher."

And as I talked with Promyss I got a new impression of him. When I first knew him he had seemed to me like one who had a vision of the dawn and was girding himself to climb the mountain crest to see it. Now he gave the impression of having actually witnessed the dawn. And I could almost see the wings of the soul growing on him. Soon he would be venturing off from the mountain ridge and flying away over sunlit valleys, past glistening peaks, up to the Empyrean itself.

Starting such an enterprise as the Zenith League had been no light effort for either Promyss or any associated with him. All this work for the League had to be done while members were earning their livelihood in various spheres. The essence of the idea was that the League should be right in life and not apart from it. Members must work for at least the bare necessities of life and know what the struggle of life was. Members of the League were, therefore, worked to their fullest capacity. They had to school themselves with the sternest severity, to deny themselves much, to give up many a pleasure, and often

appear unsociable and as setting themselves up above and apart from their fellows. No fixed rules had been laid down, but the very necessities of their high undertaking had forced them to discipline themselves with the utmost rigour as only so could they attain their ends. It was a strange paradox. They were fighting for spiritual freedom. And a valiant freedom was theirs indeed. Yet it was only won by the strictest restraint.

The actual experience of their work had proved to them that for it to be successful they must keep themselves in perfect health in body, mind and spirit. There must be no slackening here. There must be hard, methodical, careful training, and relentless limitation—the eschewing not only of evil but even of good that the better may be reached—and even also of the better for the best of all. Severity with themselves had been a prime necessity.

And it would have been hard indeed for them if each had had to work as a separate, lonely individual. But working in association made all the difference. They had now for some years been working together—through the first, nervous, venturesome days, through success to failure, through failure to success again. They had had their differences and their jealousies, and mortifications, but these were only trivialities of the moment and in the long run had counted for nothing: they had been swept away in the joy of triumph, and had been over-ridden by that firm esprit-de-corps which had grown up among the members through working together in storm and sunshine, in foul weather and in good. And each member now felt the League not only *expecting* the best of him but also *helping* him to give his best, and supporting and encouraging him in his work.

And through everything they had the sense of doing what was, up to the hilt, worth while. It was all *live* work. They were finding out for themselves what life really could be. And once having enjoyed this life of the spirit every other kind tasted vilely insipid. With all the strenuous work they had to put in, with all their self-denial, and all their rigorous training and discipline they would not have exchanged it for any other—no, not for thousands a year.

The fact is they had found *scope* for themselves. Every one of them I met gave me that impression. He was happy because he was being what he could be. They had one and all been enabled to find themselves—to discover and to use what was best in them. And in finding themselves they had found God. To many a man who had felt the need in his life for something more than the mere earning of a living, and more even than intellectual pursuits, the League had given room for the exercise of hitherto unused faculties. And to many more women—and to women more especially—it had brought, with freedom, that firm discipline which they long for. By entering the League they were, in one sense, confining themselves within the narrowest limits, and were kept strictly within them. On the other hand, within it they had not only freedom but the strongest encouragement and support and impetus for developing their best faculties. Any woman wanting an interest in life, any woman wanting something to occupy her, something worth giving the best for, could find in the work of the League all that she could desire in her highest moments. And any woman feeling she had in her a special gift could find the very opportunity for using that gift.

For women more particularly the League had been a real boon. In addition to spiritual freedom it had brought them spiritual work. It had ministered to the highest needs of their souls. Any one of them might feel that what she had to give was very little. But now she could also feel that that little was at least a necessary contribution to what was great. She was not lone and lonely in her life. She was sharing in a greater life and contributing to it. And her contribution was wanted.

And the badge—the joyous sky-lark soaring heavenward—which the members of the League always wore when in the precincts of Holm had now come to be highly honoured. The time when people made fun of the League's aspirations or resented the appearance its members had of setting themselves above their fellows was now past. Their hard honest work and loyal devotion had had its effect. The people at Holm, if they are critical, and if they are instinctively averse from change, are also very sensible of good work faithfully done. The badge had surely won its way to their esteem. And by living the ordinary social life of the place, going in and out among their fellows, the members of the League had insensibly imparted to the rest something of their own loyal spirit.

So, reviewing the present position, if Promyss and his little company had had a strenuous time in starting their enterprise they were now on the flowing tide towards further success.

This was the position of the League in the autumn when the series of Nature Fêtes was concluded. Winter was now setting in, and they must devote themselves more to indoor activities and particularly to the

Sacred Drama Society that through it the people might be still more attracted to the Minster for the refreshment of their souls.

The performance the Celestial play in the previous winter had aroused much interest. But they must not rest content with that success. There was higher perfection ahead and they must press on towards it. They must brace themselves for stronger effort this coming winter. They must summon up fresh courage and plan out new conquests.

And, as usual when they wanted to know the worst about themselves in order to better themselves they called upon Frank Kritik for his opinion. And, as usual, with evident inward satisfaction, he gave it freely.

“You are still too stiff and stilted,” he said. “You must get more flow. You must flood the audience and carry them away with you. What we must all do is to get into Seer’s head exactly what it is we want to have expressed for us. He will turn it over in his head. Then we must get his ideas and his emotions into our heads and our hearts, and convey them straight into the heads and hearts of the audience. We must all work in with one another better—and work upon one another, inciting one another.

“We must incite Seer to write a good play for us. Seer must incite Grace to produce it to perfection. And all you actors must play up to Grace. You must grasp the main idea and every slightest emotion Seer is wanting us to feel; and then by your acting and bearing and gestures and movement—by every shade of expression on your faces and every turn of tone in your voices you must convey the idea and the emotions to the audience. And not only *convey* it to them, but sweep them off their feet with it.

“There must be much more go and flow in the acting. We want to put *spirit* into the people. And there must be more spirituality in our acting.

“And this,” continued Frank Kritik, “should be easier for the actors now than when we started, for we have a better audience to play to. They are a better trained audience—more cultivated—more finely appreciative. Altogether a more satisfactory audience to play to. But actors must get closer in touch with them yet. Actors must not let them be so much apart. Audience and actors must be much more at one. The audience must feel the actors to be part of themselves, and the actors that they are part of the audience. The actors must not be acting to the audience. They must somehow make the audience feel that they are only putting into visible, tangible form the sublimest ideas and aspirations and feelings that are surging within their own souls and that they are longing to see expressed for them.

“Many a member of the audience may have had his fleeting vision of heavenly things. But the vision will have been transitory and perhaps blurred. Seer will have captured it and seen it clear, and you will have to present it to the audience for their soul’s delight. And if you actors do your part truly the audience will be transported into those realms of bliss their souls are pining for.”

Promyss caught the point. “We want more freshness, more spontaneity,” he said. “We must break down every barrier between us and the audience. We must get them to take us to their hearts. And we must do this by saying all that it is in their hearts to say but which they have not yet the language to say it in.

“Well, if we are to do that we must be ready to

catch the mood of the audience at the moment. Our spirit must be so sensitively in touch with their spirit that we must catch inspiration from them as we expect them to catch inspiration from us. There must be more reciprocity between us.

“Now if there is to be this reciprocity *we must not be tied by the written word*. That is the point. We must speak *as the spirit moves us*. The dialogue must be impromptu. It must be left to the inspiration of the moment. It must be the natural outcome of the feelings. Everything in the play must come about quite naturally and spontaneously. We shall never do all we want to unless we have spontaneity.”

Grace was afraid that trusting to the inspiration of the moment might lead to chaos: the whole performance might end in fiasco—just peter out.

But Promyss stuck to his point. They would not be playing to a strange audience. They themselves had grown out of the audience and in turn had helped to make it. They knew what was in the mind of the audience. They would be putting that into the form of a play and the audience would be helping them to express it for them—not gaping unhelpfully at them. There was no reason why the play should flop aimlessly about.

“What I propose,” said Promyss, “is that we should have living drama—*spontaneous drama*. We must be original and creative, not merely imitative. We must not, like parrots, repeat the words of a part written for us. Each of us must make up his own words as the play goes on. But the play will be kept together in a connected whole because the main story would be clear in all our minds, and each actor would enter thoroughly into the part he had to play. The play would then work itself naturally out, even

though each actor did speak as the spirit moved him at the moment.

“My idea would be that we should go about our business much as children do when they are acting charades. Most children are accustomed to acting, and love it. And in acting charades a theme is chosen, parts are allotted, suitable costumes made up, and the little company comes before their friendly audience and acts their play, each actor making up the words as he goes along and fitting in his part with the others to interpret the main theme.

“I suggest that we proceed on exactly the same lines. Theatrical companies in Italy and France have done this before now. They have despised actors who had let themselves be tied down to the written word instead of being free to speak of their own accord. And our task should be much easier because we have our own audience interested in our success. We ought to make the venture.”

The idea of spontaneous drama was new to the Committee of the Zenith League and rather startling. But they took to it and thought it out and had many discussions about it.

The upshot of their deliberations was that they decided to get Seer down and, instead of asking him to *write* out a play for them, to invite him to suggest a story, and characters. He would give the main outline and they themselves would fill in the details. He was, so far as this Zenith work was concerned, one of themselves. He had been so much with them that he knew well what they wanted to have said. And they would be able to discuss the whole plan freely together.

He gladly came down; and the Committee told him that what they wanted was a play representing some plain simple idea which was present in the minds of

every one of the audience. They would suggest the idea of the kingdom of God upon earth. All knew the idea and all would like to see a representation of it which would bring it home to them.

The characters might be symbolised but the play should deal quite directly with the conditions of life in Holm itself. It should be redolent of Holm. But it should open the eyes of the people to what the kingdom of God really meant. They should be shown how it could be made.

So the play should represent the hard conditions the people had to contend with, the temptations they had to resist, the many drags upon them they had to pull against. But it should also show how every obstacle *could* be overcome, how the very struggle elevated men, how the evil, real enough as it undoubtedly was, remained only relative and self-destructive, while the good was the truly positive and active and constructive element in life—the element which must eventually triumph; and how the evil could therefore in the end be transformed into good and the kingdom of God be *made* to come to pass even here at Holm.

The play would show men struggling against adverse influences and circumstances. And it would show forth God in human life—show how His spirit works in living men and women.

This was the general idea which was submitted to Seer; and he took it away with him and thought it over—how he could best make a story of it. Eventually he built up one on the conception of the kingdom of God being like a little child. Jesus had often recurred to that theme. And Seer adopted it as the basis of his story. He would portray a man determined to be born again and become like a little child;

and he would show all the impediments which lay in his way and how he overcame them.

Having got the main lines of his story in his mind and the various characters determined he came down to Holm and met the Sacred Drama Society and explained it to them. They discussed it in all its bearings and meanings, modified it to some extent but adopted it in principle. They got into their minds the general outline of what they would represent, just as children have the idea which they mean to represent in a charade.

But they did not have a performance straight away. They first had various expositions of it and long and free discussions of those expositions, till they thoroughly understood what they were at, and had made up their minds about it, and about who would best represent the different characters.

And here they felt more than ever the exceeding importance of a principle they had had in mind from the first. They would have to represent heroic and saintly characters. How could they do that unless they were heroic and saintly themselves? The least flaw in their characters would show up more than ever in spontaneous drama when they had to act as the spirit moved them. Unless they were pure in heart the spirit could not move them purely. Their acting would faithfully reflect their true nature. And unless their true nature were spiritual they could not expect the *acting* to be spiritual. And unless their acting were spiritual they could not expect to move their audience.

There was no need to impress it on them. It was borne in upon each member of the Sacred Drama Society insistent enough that he must be *whole*. There must not be the slightest imperfection. The

slightest defect or deficiency might jar the whole movement. A single breath of disease might contaminate the whole body. For spontaneous drama—and especially for spontaneous sacred drama—there must be perfection.

They gradually became accustomed to the idea of spontaneous drama, and after much discussion and rehearsal were ready for a definite performance. But by now the winter had passed, and they chose Whit Monday as the most appropriate day on which to have their first presentation of the new drama in the new style. And, as they were convinced it would make a telling appeal, Vera Love and Promyss made special efforts to get Blak Enmytie, Sekuler Kulcher, Vapid Worldling, and Fikkel Kaprees to come to it. Now, if ever, would be the chance of winning them over.

CHAPTER XXII

THE FIRE OF LOVE

THE great day for the first performance on the new lines had arrived. I had with difficulty obtained admission, as the places had been jealously reserved for those who had in some way or other worked for the Sacred Drama Society, or the League in general : and that number was Legion. The theatre was full to its capacity. An unmistakable thrill was in the air. People were talking excitedly, and there was that buzz of expectancy which precedes some great event.

Soon the orchestra begins playing some heavenly music, and this quickly quiets the hum, and holds every heart in suspense.

Then the music ceases. A breathless hush falls upon the meeting. And the drama begins.

The scene opens with a group of cottages, with flower gardens in front of them and giving on to a field. Trees rise up behind the cottages. The song of birds is in the air. Chickens are picking about in the field. By one cottage is a cat. A woman is hanging up clothes on a clothes line. A labourer is just returning from his work. A baby is lying in a cot in a garden with a little girl looking after it.

In the field children are playing. A little girl is skipping, boys are throwing a ball from one to another. One boy is chevyng another. Some are playing with a dog. All are shouting and jumping about. Two little girls are seated on the ground making daisy chains and laughing merrily.

A young man is looking on. "I am told to seek

first the kingdom of God," he says, "and I am told the kingdom of God is like a little child, and that if I wish to enter it I must become again like a little child. But these children are so different from one another. That is an innocent-looking, little girl walking about with a bunch of flowers in her hand; but she is a dull little thing, for when I asked her where she got the flowers she could only bury her face in them and not say a word. That boy is a sharp, cheery little fellow, but he is evidently up to every kind of prank. He ran behind that other boy and pushed him down and pummelled him till he cried. Some are strong and pushful; others are shy and timid. A very few are clean: most of them are covered with dirt. Some look good enough; others—well, not *quite* so good."

As he is making these reflections Farmhand appears. "Children," he says, "are perfect pests. You have to be always watching them. Directly your eye is off them they are getting into your hay-field trampling it down so that it is not fit to mow; or breaking down your hedges looking for birds' nests; or getting into a pond and covering themselves with mud; or stealing apples out of your orchard. They are good enough in a way, but they are noisy nuisances, all the same."

He passes on and Mother appears. "Five of those are mine," she says, "and I would not be without one of them for the world. I have to keep my eye on them, but they are as good as gold. If you love them they'll love you. And, dear little things, they like to be loved, and they like loving. And I find that if they do a naughty thing I have only to tell them quite firmly that they are not to do it and they'll stop. They don't like doing what hurts me. And

they're very fond of each other. They have their little outbursts and slap one another. But that little girl of mine is just like a mother with the baby and looks after it, and the baby likes being looked after by her. And they all love being about together."

The children all disappear. The young man, Seeker by name, thinks over the matter. Here are evident facts. Children enjoy life. Children love flowers and love animals. And children love those who love them; and they like to be loved. And children are confiding. Whether they are also naughty or not does not so much matter. Naughtiness is not the main point about them. It is only exuberance of spirits, misdirected energy—not real wickedness. Their lovingness and liveliness is what mostly matters. And they are quick enough to know who cares for them and who doesn't; whom they can trust and whom they can't. And whom they can love they will love with their whole little selves.

"Everyone loves to have children about him. The hardest men of the world will do their bidding. They must therefore have in them some charm which is worth recapturing. What is it? What is it that Jesus saw in them that he held them up to us as an example we should go by? What is it in these children that I must admire and lay hold on? They are very different from one another. What is it that they have in common that I must emulate?

"It must be something very elusive—very subtle and difficult to grasp. Perhaps it is their freshness and vitality; their innocence, and open, fearless ways; and the sweet love they have to give to those they trust.

"Whatever it is, I myself must once have had it, so I must try and recapture it. Unless I am once

again as a little child I cannot enter the kingdom of God. And to enter the kingdom of God is my aim."

The second Act was placed in a village street. All classes and types meet here in their comings and goings, and there are many greetings in the market place. It was known that Seeker was trying to regain the innocence of a little child. Chaff meets him and cheerily asks him how he is getting on towards his second childhood. But Seeker can put up with Chaff and gives him back as good as he gave. He may be wanting to be like a child but he is no simpleton.

With Mock it was different. It was nasty to be scoffed at; and Seeker felt it. He was up in arms against Mock at once and resented him.

Then he came to Business; and Business was hard and cold and soulless. There was no sentimentality about him. He had to be practical. Success or failure with him was measured definitely and unmistakably in money. If he gave way to sentimentality his lapse would inexorably be shown in the accounts. He might at times be disposed to be lenient himself but he was trustee for other people's money and must think of them.

How could Seeker hold his own in the presence of this hard, shrewd man? If he were guileless and innocent and confiding Business might take advantage of him. But Seeker reflects that children if they are confiding are no fools. They are extremely sharp little things. They take the measure of people with amazing accuracy. Whom they can trust they trust completely. Upon whom they cannot trust they quite simply and firmly and irrevocably but also quite inoffensively refuse to confer their favours.

Seeker goes on this plan in dealing with Business. He knows that Business could not get on at all if he

trusted nobody and that he would come to grief if he trusted everybody indiscriminately. So Seeker cultivated this art of discrimination that children have. He made his selection of the good points and the bad points in Business. With the bad he would have nothing whatever to do. Upon the good he would, with the courage and abandon of a child, put his whole trust completely and unreservedly. Business found it satisfactory to deal with such a man. And Seeker got on well.

And he was kept up to the mark by Hard Facts—stern, uncompromising people very blunt of speech, and with a nasty habit of obtruding upon you when you are least wanting to see them. Seeker would willingly have avoided them. But whichever way he went he would be sure to run up against them. He might be on his way to Love or Hope or Faith and be looking forward to an enjoyable time with them. But, sure enough, there the Hard Facts would be straight in front of him and most forbidding in their aspect, and he had to face them fair and square. And they would be most outspoken in their language, too. They would tell poor Seeker straight out that he might desire as much as he would to be like a little child but he would have to pay his bills—the butcher's, the baker's, the tailor's, the doctor's—as well as house-rent, servant's wages, rates and taxes. These were unpleasant reminders. And, however much the Hard Facts might assure him that they only spoke to him for the good of his soul and that he would be grateful to them afterwards, he did not love them the better for that.

And he had barely got rid of the Hard Facts by assuring them that he would straightway pay his bills and work extra time so as to be able to pay his taxes

and provide for contingencies, when he runs straight into the arms of the Petty Vexations. These troublesome little people seemed absolutely to pervade Holm. You could not stir without meeting one or other of them. They were not so unrelenting as the Hard Facts. But they were much more irritating. And the most annoying thing about them was that they took the heart out of those they met, and aroused all those very feelings people were most anxious to keep down. Seeker had had a full day's work. Though tired he was feeling satisfied with himself. Even his encounter with the Hard Facts had not been able really to depress him, for he had summoned up courage to meet them and had formed his good resolutions and meant to carry them out. But these Petty Vexations were almost too much for him. And they pestered him so he could not get away from them. They frayed his temper. They aroused spiteful feelings. And they caused him to harbour all kinds of evil thoughts. The Petty Vexations always had the effect of making Seeker annoyed with himself. How was he to preserve the freshness and innocence of childhood in face of them?

An Importunate Widow was another of his troubles. She used to call upon him begging for subscriptions for a multitude of most worthy objects. He admired her courage and her devotion to the good causes. And he hated having to refuse. As far as his inclinations went he would have liked to satisfy all her demands. But he had not the means. He had, therefore, to make a choice. And making a choice meant refusing some. And refusing a single one made his heart ache. Moreover, even to those he did contribute towards he could only give a small amount. And this also made him sad. It was sad to feel how much suffering

there was in the world that had to be relieved. And it was sad to think how much good needed to be done but could not be done for want of the requisite funds. So the sight of the Importunate Widow was a grief to him.

Another person whom Seeker was continually meeting was Insidious Temptation. She was not annoying like the Petty Vexations. She was very attractive. That was the danger. She was a big, cheerful girl, abounding in life, very pretty, and possessing a way with her that would nearly carry him off. She was indeed hard to resist. And why shouldn't he be like a child and throw himself in her arms?

He was on the point of doing so when he caught sight of the Consequences. And they in their implacable way told him what succumbing to Insidious Temptation would mean—children whom he could not afford to keep, bondage for life to a woman who attracted all the lower but none of the higher part of his nature, and whom when that lower part was satisfied, and he came in contact with women who could satisfy his higher nature, he would learn to despise.

And while he was disposed to ignore the Consequences and fall to the attractions of Insidious Temptation he would meet with one of the Sudden Blows or the Nasty Shocks—very abrupt people who would bring him up sharp and without any regard for his feelings tell him the most heart-rending news. And he would be constantly meeting the Gnawing Anxieties who, though not so abrupt, were more frequently met with and were calculated to depress him.

But, in spite of his encounters with Hard Facts, Sudden Blows and the rest, Seeker persevered on. He still retained much of the child's capacity for response. He had some of the resiliency of the child.

Pressed down he might be, but he would bound up again. He kept true to the child that was yet within him.

And when the Weighty Responsibilities came upon him he ran eagerly forward to meet them. They were a serious folk who have a depressing effect upon weaklings. But upon Seeker their effect was bracing and invigorating. Their very gravity seemed to arouse the best spirit within him. And so also did the Sorrows. They were sad in appearance. But there was sweetness hidden in them. And after they had passed it was always this impression of sweetness that they left on Seeker and he blessed them for it.

The Opportunities were other people he was often encountering. And they did not impose themselves upon him and he was not eager to rid himself of them as he was of the Petty Vexations. They were fleeting and had to be seized instantly and with both hands or they would pass by before he had hardly seen them. And Seeker did make a point of seizing these Opportunities firmly by the hand because he well knew the good he could get from them. He might neglect the Petty Vexations as much as he liked. And the more he neglected them the better. He might even despise them. But he could not afford to neglect the Opportunities. He had to make the most of them while he had them.

So with the Responsibilities and Opportunities he made friends and they helped him along. The Responsibilities got the best out of him; and this enabled him, in his turn, to get the best out of the Opportunities. They all worked in with each other. And he went forward cheerily in his efforts to reach the Kingdom of God.

The scene of the third Act was a Place of Worship.

When the bells of the corridor ring, and the audience, as usual, came trooping back into the theatre they found only a subdued light. The actors could just be discerned grouped round the central Sacred Light issuing from the floor of the theatre. The upper ring of the dome was removed so that the stars at the zenith could be seen shining through it. And the whole theatre was lighted only to star-light power. The effect was weird and awe-some.

Standing over the Sacred Light and straight under the stars a preacher first glanced upward and prayed that utterance might be given him, and then in words of fire proceeded to exhort the congregation round him. "One among us is striving to be again as a little child. He is right. Of such is the kingdom. And the kingdom of God we must seek *first*. And the kingdom of God is *within* us. It is the child still in us.

"But to quicken it into fervent life we need to be touched from *without*. We must send up burning petitions that we may be fired by the Holy Spirit. And we must continue with one accord in prayer and supplication, and have faith that all things whatsoever we ask in prayer, believing, we shall receive.

"The disciples had done this. And we must do the same. Jesus had foretold that when he was departed from them the Holy Spirit would descend upon them. And this had indeed happened. When they were assembled together there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and they were filled with the Holy Ghost. And this that happened to them must happen to us."

The preacher then begged them all to kneel with him in prayer, and unite in one great cry to God that they might be endued with power from on high, that God would pour out His Spirit on them as He had

poured it out on the Day of Pentecost and make His grace abound in their hearts.

And all knelt—while he entreated, and besought, and implored God to let His Holy Spirit descend upon those there and then assembled. And as he prayed there from the very depths of his soul and with every atom of it in his prayer an agonising cry to God burst out involuntarily from one of the congregation.* It was wholly unpremeditated and sprang from an inner intensity of feeling. But it sent a thrill like an electric shock through the actor-congregation and through its audience alike.

A deep silence followed—an awe-full hush, as if some tremendous doom was pending.

Then, of a sudden, came a strange and wonderful happening.

In the dim, mysterious star-light actors and audience alike burst out in torrents of prayer. Here one, there another would break forth in prayer. And their passionate sincerity would unite all in perfect harmony till the sound was like music born of angels playing on the souls of men.

Everyone seemed of a sudden awakened to some urgent need of his soul—a need so desperate as to cause him pain agonising to behold. He became glaringly conscious of his own vile impurity beside the awful holiness of God, and beside the holiness of a little child. He felt the fearful need of purification. And in the agony of this need he would implore God to meet it. Each would make his own separate prayer as if wholly unconscious of the presence of any one else. He and his God would seem to him to be alone together. He would be standing with his soul naked

* I was told afterwards that it was Fervent Dezyre: she could not contain herself longer.

—face to face with his God. But as one here and another there would be praying his very soul out, and as more and more joined in, the prayers would gather in volume and at the same time blend together and swell into a mighty roar of supplication most wonderful to hear.

Then from prayer they would swing to song; and with no deliberate intention. They would literally go as the spirit moved them. Then back they would turn to prayer—and back again to song, according to the varying need of the moment. They were rent and torn with emotion. The Holy Spirit was sweeping through them, tearing them from their foundations, tossing them hither and thither. They were bursting with it. Sometimes they were crying out in an agony of joy. Sometimes they were weeping and laughing. They were being cleansed of their sins with a fearful purification. A new and contrite heart was being created within them. Their eyes were being illuminated with a new vision. God's near Presence was felt a living thing among them. He was there in their very midst. He was *in* them—manifesting Himself through them. And as they prayed and spoke and sang with complete spontaneity and in the most simple and natural way, they had the feeling that not they were speaking but God. They were indeed often unconscious of what they were saying and singing.

They spoke as they had never spoken before. Words came flowing out and right from the very depths of them. They had a convincing sincerity beyond all rhetoric and their words pierced far into the souls of those who heard them. And they sang with the sweetness of angel choirs.

And they had a power within them which nothing could resist. They could do anything. And they were

light as air. They could go anywhere. Now indeed they were redeemed of their transgressions. Now indeed they had been born again. Now once more they were as little children with all their abandon and unself-consciousness, their purity and innocence. Now, at last, they knew what life could really be.

Joy ineffable thrilled through the meeting. There and then they had seen the kingdom of God. They were in heaven.

And they could have remained there for ever singing and praying. But a term had necessarily to be set and in a lull Vicker mounted the orchestra and raising his arm beckoned silence, and in the dear familiar tone gave the old, old blessing on them. And they departed to their homes with a great peace in their hearts, full of good will to mankind, and full of the power of the Holy Spirit to bring it into effect.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE FIRE SPREADS

THE Zenith League had sought to lift men out of themselves. Their wish had been fulfilled with a vengeance. Those who were in the Minster that wonderful evening had behaved as if on fire with God. There was an amazing change in them. Their eyes glowed with the light of more than genius. The whole countenance of each shone like a lamp. Men were, truly, burning and shining lights. And they spoke with a power and flow and ease and conviction never known before.

After the close of the meeting the leaders had held a hasty consultation. They agreed that what had happened was altogether too sacred for them ever to produce that drama again. But they must offer up thanks to God forthwith. That must be the very first thing to do. So they asked Vicker to hold a special service of Thanksgiving in the church on the following evening.

Vicker readily consented. The church was filled to its utmost capacity long before the service was timed to commence. And the people, full of the glow of the previous evening, commenced singing and praying of their own accord. Sometimes they would be in prayer, sometimes in song. Often, as on the previous day, many would be praying together, but there was in this nothing discordant. All the prayers were united in some deep harmony and went up in a single aspiration to God.

In the meanwhile, hundreds who could not gain

admittance were assembled outside the church carrying on the refrain of the hymns as the music poured out through the windows. Glad Ardour immediately set to work to organise a procession. And they marched away to the meadow singing as they went, and there offered up their thanks to God for the blessing which had been vouchsafed to them.

Under the steady influence of the stars and the spacious vault of heaven there was less exuberance but perhaps even deeper intensity of emotion, and a peculiar sweetness—a comforting sense of the everlasting. They had the assurance that what they felt was not the mere excitement of the moment but something in the eternal nature of things which would endure for ever.

For days following the Minster was crowded with people longing to know what had happened and what was going to be done in future. They could not let the holy fervour die down. What was to be done to maintain it? What was to be done to spread it?

The Drama Society could not bring themselves to perform their play again. Nor did the people want it. They simply wanted to meet together and feel the close presence of God—feel themselves dwelling in God and feel God dwelling in them.

So every night both in the theatre and in the music room meetings were held at which all were free to speak, or to pray, or to sing, as the spirit moved them. There was no attempt to force emotion—and no need to. All came bubbling spontaneously up. And only the gentlest guidance was required to keep the meetings together and moving in a definite direction—a Godward direction. But this general control was required, and it was exercised at each meeting by either Golden Promys or Hope or Faith.

The whole happening was very remarkable. But it was by no means unique. It was only another instance of those spiritual upheavals which mankind experience in the course of their upward development. Often there have been these stirrings in the souls of men. Under the spiritual stress men lose their customary composure and are torn and swayed by the spirit seething within them till what in ordinary times they would never dream of doing they now do with supreme unself-consciousness. The change is comparable with that which takes place in men and women when they are in love, or with the exaltation they experience at the outbreak or close of a war. As they then break through all ordinary reserve, and say and do things they would in normal times think themselves utterly incapable of doing, so was it now: they prayed and they sang and they laughed and they wept beyond anything they had hitherto ever heard of or imagined.

And the whole village was aflame with the spirit. There was something more than peace and goodwill in men's hearts. They were in a state of the highest spiritual exaltation. Their faces positively shone with joy. They could see love in every human being. They had compassion on every living creature. They could see beauty in the meanest thing.

A lovely, human, passionate life of the spirit had suddenly leapt from a mere idea into actual being. The fire of God within the souls of men had burst into flame. Commonplace people became saints; the sensual pure; the malicious gentle; the vulgar noble.

As on the first joyous Armistice Day, all barriers between man and man were for the time broken down.

In the delight of finding their common divinity men greeted each other as brothers. Even Blak Enmytie,

Sekuler Kulcher, Vapid Worldling and Fikkel Kaprees were utterly transformed. Blak Enmytie was a different man. His bitterness was gone; and that strong sense of kinship with his fellow workmen which he had always possessed had now extended to include every one of his fellow-countrymen. The melted Sekuler Kulcher was now running over with the milk of human kindness. Vapid Worldling had seen life which left all other pale and anæmic beside it, and felt that henceforth no other life than the life of the spirit would ever be worth living. And Fikkel Kaprees at last felt steadied and as if she had found something into which she could recklessly fling her whole self.

The tense emotional excitement in time had subsided but it had left things very different from what they were before. The sense of the presence of God had abided with men. There was a keener zeal in His service. The place was alive as it had never been before. The spiritual life had been quickened. Men had acquired a sense of holiness and hungered and thirsted after it. They were aware of its value and would now work for it as zealously as they had formerly worked for wealth.

And this reverence for holy things begat a natural courtesy of manner. Men showed a consideration for one another, a refinement of feeling, and a compassion they had never known before.

And with this reverence for every created thing, and this desire for holiness, went a disgust for all deceit and meanness, all jealousies, suspicions, back-biting and slander, pride and hypocrisy. Men wanted with their whole hearts to lead cleaner, purer, sincerer, brighter lives. And they went about light of step, and glad of eye, with strong and lively faith in the thorough worthwhileness of their new life.

There was abroad in the place a new spiritual elevation, a new contentment of spirit, a new solemnity, a new humility, and a new confidence in the goodness of things. Men had rediscovered happiness. They had recaptured the happiness of childhood. And being inwardly at peace with themselves they were able to deal more competently with the ordinary affairs and relationships of life. Their work was done with greater efficiency. There was a readier give and take in their common intercourse with one another. And they were able to stand the fearful strain of the hardest, highest, and happiest activities.

Meanwhile, the fame of the happenings at Holm had spread far and wide. People from neighbouring villages came pouring in to hear about it, and to catch the heavenly spirit. And several leading men came down from Towne to see for themselves if there was really anything in it, or if it was all only empty excitement.

Invitations came, too, from many parts of the country for speakers to address meetings and tell what had happened and if possible communicate some of the fire. Promyss himself would not go. Now the spirit had come he wanted to capture it securely and enshrine it in their organisation. He wanted to make the Zenith League a fitting body for this Holy Spirit—a body through which It could always freely manifest Itself. And he had to be careful lest this organisation simply *encased* the spirit, and was not truly a means whereby It could express Itself. This was of cardinal importance. The organisation in which the Spirit was enshrined must not be too rigid: it must be capable of moving with the times, and providing for the future; it must allow of men's continually revising their conception of God, of Jesus Christ, and of

the Christ-that-is-to-be. Round an unchangeable inmost core there must be perfect flexibility and adaptability. All this would require infinite care and thought at the present critical time. And Promyss must remain with Faith and Hope and Grace and Vera Love to consolidate their gains. But they were willing to spare Flaming Zeele and Fervent Dezyre, Glad Ardour, Ernest Interest, and Gay Kurridge to go about the country spreading the glad news.

So these departed on their Mission. All over Our-ownland they travelled, telling what had happened at Holm and how it came about; and, wherever villages or towns desired it, they helped them by the experience at Holm to form their own Zenith Leagues. These might not be all on the same pattern. One village might have only a Sacred Musical Society. Another only a Sacred Dramatic Society. A third only a Truth Society. But wherever Flaming Zeele or the others went they were able to show the beauty of the spirit and arouse enthusiasm for spiritual things. And if the Zenith League of Holm was nowhere slavishly copied it everywhere furnished a model. Holm had shown what *could* be done. And other places were inspired in their own way to go and do likewise. And a large number of them did.

And the Zenith League at Holm made no attempt whatever to impose its own ideas or rules or organization upon any other locality. Its sole wish was to incite other villages and towns to create their own organisation styled by whatever title they liked. It was of the very essence of their ideas that each body must be vital and developing from within, not moulded from without. It must be responsive to stimulus but not imposed on from outside. It must create from within outwards to meet its own requirements and the

compelling conditions of the time. But it must be the inner spirit of the place that must create its own machinery—its own body or organisation. Then there would be elasticity and freedom and scope to expand as necessity demanded—and greater local interest and enthusiasm.

Whether all these local bodies might not eventually be linked together in one greater body with a central control was a question which might eventually arise. Time would show. For the present what was necessary—and that very urgently—was to ensure that in each place where the envoys went the spirit generated there was not allowed to evaporate into space but was safely caught and enshrined in some body that was likely to endure and expand.

And from the natural instinct of the people each place touched did thus form its own organisation which would embody the new spirit. And there grew up in Towne itself, and in many parts of the country, local Zenith Leagues, each with its own special character and each feeling pride in its own self-development.

But all had the lark for their emblem, the azure-blue of hope and of the purity of the sky for their colour, and “The Highest” for their motto.

CHAPTER XXIV

FUTURITY

WHILE Flaming Zeele and his associates were traversing the country spreading the news of what had been done at Holm, and fostering every incipient effort to form Musical Societies and Dramatic Societies more or less on the lines of the Zenith League, the leaders of the League itself were concentrating their attention on consolidating the gains already won and preparing for the future. The zealous apostles were extending the work in space. The leaders would extend it in time—they would be forward-reaching, and think of the generations to come. They would take thought for the morrow.

They had been inspired. They had been filled with the Holy Ghost—with the Holy Spirit of God. But they would not rest content there. They would not be content with being filled like vessels—or being only channels, or vehicles, or instruments of God. They would not even regard themselves as *messengers* of God. For they felt themselves commissioned for something much more than merely carrying a message. They would be responsible *agents* and *ambassadors* of God, acting on their own responsibility in their own way. Doing God's will, certainly, but not expecting orders over every detail. Rather would they divine the word of God, grasp His main intention; and then carry it out in the way that seemed to them best.

An ambassador, they argued, is not merely the bearer of a message, and does not expect to have

instructions on every minute point. He is chosen for his ability to represent his country. He is informed of the main lines of policy. He is then left to use his discretion as to how he will interpret that policy—that *will* of his country—to the people to whom he is sent, and how he can best carry it into effect. And for that purpose he is made a plenipotentiary: he is given full powers. And having these full powers he does not go by the *letter* of his instructions and is not continually referring to them. He imbues himself with their spirit and goes by that. He makes out their main import and acts upon it.

The leaders of the Zenith League determined to act on the same lines. They looked upon themselves as ambassadors of God, charged with a Divine mission. The mistake had often been made in the past for inspired men to refuse to move or speak until they felt within them the commands of the Holy Spirit. They seemed to regard themselves as little better than mouthpieces through which God would speak or instruments which God would use, as a violinist uses a violin, or messengers carrying a message from God. The Zenith Leaders would have none of this. They took quite a different view of their relationship to God.

God had inestimably favoured them by filling them with His Holy Spirit. Now it was *their* part, using every faculty with which God had endowed them, and using it to the full, to *interpret* that Holy Will and Intention and carry it into effect in the way that seemed to them best. They might blunder and fail. That did not matter. Others would learn by their experience. And failure itself was better than sitting still and waiting for instructions. They must bear clearly in their minds that they were *agents*, and

must be ready to bear the responsibility of agents. They were not merely instruments on which God plays, much less channels, like irrigation canals, through which He pours His Spirit to fertilise the earth. They were positive, creative agents. *Men*, in fact. Men of action. Men with God in them. Men who felt the dignity and responsibility of representing God. Men full of the thrill that responsibility brings.

This was the leaders' attitude towards God. And in this new stage of their work they felt the responsibility of first gathering themselves together—collecting themselves—after the tense emotional strain of the great days they had just gone through. They must *steady* themselves for the work before them. After the over-powering emotion of their Day of Pentecost they had once more to get hold of their reason and intellect to guide them in their future ways. They must be ready to do something: and do the wisest thing. Their intellects had been given them by God and must be used. Their sacred experience was not *unreasonable*—or against reason. In it they had reached up to what was beyond and above reason. And reason alone could never have taken them there—unless indeed it was fused to white heat in the fire of emotion. But now with their reason heightened by that experience into supreme wisdom, they must use it to lighten their way in the path before them. Because they had been filled with the Holy Ghost they must not cease to use their wits. They must use them all the more, for they had great and responsible work before them.

They had to provide for the future. And here they must make a definitely new departure. So far men had talked and talked about making themselves like Christ, but no one had truly and thoroughly in his

heart believed that he ever really *could* be like him. But why not? If faith could remove mountains why could it not make a man like Christ? We are the children of God. We are made in the image of God. God is trying to make us like Him. Can we doubt that God will succeed? Can we doubt that He will create others like Christ? We need not suppose that they will be *exactly* like, for no two things in this world are exactly alike. But they will be on the same level of being as Christ. And we as the representatives, as the responsible spiritual agents and executants of God's will should have sufficient trust in Him to believe that we here in Ourownland should be able to produce another Christ. This is what the Zenith leaders argued. We would not *imitate* Christ. We would not model ourselves exactly on him. But we would expect to rise to his level. And as the people of Israel always looked forward to the appearance of a Messiah so must the people of Ourownland look forward to producing a Christ of their own. It would be mean and unworthy of them to have any less an ambition. Nor need we suppose that the future Christ should be a man. The Christ might equally well be a woman. There is no inherent necessity of things that the Christ should be a man. All that is necessary is that he or she should be a perfect manifestation of God—of the Holy Spirit of the universe.

He would, of course, pass unrecognised by his contemporaries. They would be too close to him to see him for what he really was. To recognise any one on the Christ level you have to be at the proper focal distance. Nor would he want to be recognised. He would love to be going in and out among his fellows as one of themselves. To have any distance put between him and them would be more than he could allow. The

future Christ would not recognise himself as such ; he would not be recognised by his contemporaries ; and he would not want to be. Only after long years would men see that he or she had indeed risen to the level of Christ and was worthy to be called a Christ.

But if this ambition was to be fulfilled the greatest attention must be paid to the upbringing of *children*. The kingdom of God was like a little child. True. But little children must be made—or rather kept—like the kingdom of God. All their holy innocence must be preserved untainted. The experience they had of life in the early precious days must be such as only to strengthen their wisdom while keeping their innocence untarnished, so that when they eventually went out into the world all possible pollutions would simply fall off their backs leaving no trace of a stain.

The Zenith Leaders must see to it that the children were so brought up that they eventually became all they *should* become. All that it was in a child to be that it should be helped to become. Nothing should be allowed to stand in the way of their spiritual growth. All that could be done to keep it healthy should be provided. The spirit of God was welling up in little children, like the spirit of song in young larks. All that would stifle it must be removed. Every condition that would favour it must be provided. They must be free to the air and sunshine and rain—free to develop their highest possibilities.

For the true God-children of the future would have wings to their souls. They would be able to fly when they grew up. There would then be no need for them to plod groaning up the mountain side. They would be able to rise from their homes on the earth, and, like the lark, soar to heaven, singing as they soared. And they would have eyes to their souls which would

enable them to see beauties about them which no lark or man can now perceive.

To produce such children peculiar care must be taken of their spiritual development in those precious earliest years when they were fresh from God, sensitive, responsive, malleable and adaptive. And this care was especially the task of the mother and the home.

Mothers, of all others, were, then, the special ambassadors of God. And they of all others must regard themselves as *agents* and not *instruments*—as agents whom God looks to to carry out His purposes. They could not possibly afford to be looking over their shoulders every moment for orders. They had to act instantly on their own responsibility, or the damage would be done, or the opportunity passed. Exceedingly important was it, then, that they should be so saturated with the Spirit of God, so imbued with His Intention, so full of His Wisdom, that when the strain of responsibility suddenly came full on them they would instinctively rise to the occasion and make the right response.

So the Zenith leaders concluded. They were insistent, therefore, that they must have at their disposal the collective wisdom of the mothers. Every mother has known what love is. She has known what the love of husband and wife is. She has known that most lovely of all loves—the love that the birth of the firstborn brings. Every mother, therefore, knows at first-hand what God is like. And the yearning which all mothers have for their children's happiness and the experience they had gained in trying to bring their longings into effect the Zenith leaders wanted now to make use of to the full. They, therefore, entrusted to Vera Love the task of getting together a

few women, like Mother Devoshun, who had a great love for children, and some mothers of experience and spiritual discernment, and of setting them to work devising means for helping mothers in the spiritual training of their children.

It was a task after Vera Love's whole heart. She could now more effectively than ever carry out her main resolution to devote herself to her country's welfare. And having Mother Devoshun and Constance Payshence working with her, and having also all the resources and facilities of the League at her disposal, she would be able to do immeasurably more for mothers and their children than the keenest mother would ever be able to do alone.

The ultimate aim of Vera Love would be the *spiritual* welfare of the children. Others would look after their bodily welfare, and others after their intellectual welfare. Vera Love's Committee would look after their spiritual welfare. And of their spiritual welfare—not in the schools or at Church—but in their homes. For it is in the *home* that a child's spirit is refined or coarsened, crushed or nourished in its tenderest years.

The spiritualising of the home was then the main task before Vera Love and her associates.

They got together at once, and from their united experience came to the following conclusion.

They first of all indignantly repudiated the pernicious doctrine that the child—the impressionable, responsive material—upon which they would have to work was full of original sin, born in iniquity, inherently wicked. Certainly the child had in him the animal instincts, impulses, and propensities of his remote animal ancestry. But animals are not wicked.

They are very loveable; and we all love them. And in addition to the qualities we love in animals the child bears within him spiritual instincts, impulses, and propensities which he has inherited from his human ancestors.

The child is a holy child, a child of God. Trailing clouds of glory does he come from God, who is his home; and Heaven lies about him in his infancy. Wordsworth was right there.

He is a precious gift of intermingled possibilities—possibilities for evil, certainly, or there would be no merit or joy in achieving good. But possibilities, also, of the supremely divine. He may be full of passionate impulses but the main impulse is a spiritual impulse—an impulse Godward. He has a natural appetite for spiritual food. He does naturally hunger and thirst after righteousness, and it is with divine food that he should be nourished if he is not to starve spiritually.

The child is, too, exceedingly sensitive to impressions. But he is not merely receptive of these impressions as clay is of the potter's hands. He is *responsive* as well. He has a capacity for sorting out the innumerable impressions made upon him and choosing which he will retain and which repel—which are good for him and which are bad. He is not always right. He has to gain wisdom by experience. But the power of choice is there from the first. He will kick and fight against some and cry loudly for others.

And as soon as he is beyond his infancy his love of spiritual things grows rapidly. He is full of wonder and of curiosity to know, persistent in enquiry, with a faultless memory and unrelenting logic. He has a strong and vivid imagination and loves being told stories and looking at pictures and listening to music; and he will build a beautiful spiritual world of his

own. He adores beauty too—especially the beauty of flowers and colours. And he loves animals and loves his little playmates and his Mummy and Daddie and nurse and those about him. He enjoys loving and loves being loved, and is exceedingly responsive to love. And he is very confiding and trustful and full of zest for play and capacity for enjoyment—and for suffering pain, also—for the two necessarily go together. He is very imitative, too, and loves to excel and to be admired for what he does. And soon he acquires the *creative* urge. He wants to put ideas instantly into *practice*. He wants to draw and to paint. He makes up stories. And he delights in dressing up and play acting and “pretending.” He joys in the fact of *using* his faculties and welcomes strain and stress.

Withal, he is naturally reverent. The world is full of wonder for him, and of awe. And he has faith in the Unseen. In the root of his little being he is essentially religious.

This seemed to be verdict of mothers upon children, and being thus agreed as to the nature of the material they had to work on they sought the guidance of Clere Lyte and the Truth Society in determining what they should help the child to grow into, and how they should describe the world about him. The child would be asking endless questions. What is God like? Who made God? Where does He live? Why can't I see God? Why can't I hear God? In the Bible men are always hearing Him: why can't I? Can God do anything? If He can why doesn't He make me good? Why doesn't He make everyone good? Where did baby come from? What happens to people when they die? Where does Jesus live? If he is here why can't I see him? All these questions, or questions like them,

will be asked, and mothers must be ready with answers for them. Their answers may be very elementary but they must be true as far as they go. Vera Love and the mothers therefore asked Clere Lyte to have special meetings where they could discuss together what are the barest, simplest, plainest truths about the world and its governance that they should convey to the children.

And for the mothers themselves it was of vital importance that they should have embedded in their minds a sharp, clear conception of the fundamental character of that mysterious Power which brought their child into being—of what they really meant when they spoke about God. They had to stand to their children as the representatives and agents of God. It would be through them that the child would get his idea of God. A deep responsibility lay, therefore, on them to learn, and go on learning, all they could about God and His ways; and find out more and more of His will and intention. And the responsibility was all the greater because it was these very questions about religion that it was most important *should* be answered—and answered with sincerity and conviction.

Clere Lyte, therefore, encouraged the mothers to put all their difficulties before him that they and he might work out a solution together. It was a help to him, too, to have the experience of mothers—and also of children, for children are often very acute little philosophers.

What was the kind of man or woman a mother should have in her mind her child should become was very easily settled. He should be a God-man. He was born a God-child, and he should be helped to grow into a God-man. That is, he should be so steeped in

the spirit of God that his only wish would be to do the will of God; and he should be so clear in his mind what the will of God was that he could confidently carry it out.

And the simple conception of God which emerged from these discussions between Clere Lyte and the mothers was that He was that mysterious unseen Power which we can feel working in ourselves when we are loving most, and which we know must be working in the world about us. When we see goodness anywhere that is a sign of the working of God. When we see beauty anywhere that is another manifestation of God. When the child feels his mother loving him very much that is God loving him. When the child is loving anyone very much that is God inside him which is loving. When he sees a lovely flower, the loveliness of the flower is the loveliness of God. And when he wants to kiss it he is loving God. And when we want to know most about what God is like we learn all we can about Jesus, for Jesus was more like God than anyone. And from Jesus we learn that God in His essential nature is Love. It is the Spirit of Love which animates and governs the world.

The familiar conception of God was still the one to retain. It only required to be made plainer and simpler.

CHAPTER XXV

THE QUEENDOM OF HOME

WITH their minds now clear as to the essential nature of the child they had to work on; as to the kind of man or woman they wanted to help it to become, and also as to the main character of the world in which they and the child had to live, Vera Love and her mothers and nurses could now set about their task of training mothers and helping them with the training of their children.

Most women slip quite casually into the sacred position of mother. They have little enough previous knowledge of tending the physical health of children. Even less of tending their mental health. And almost none at all of tending their spiritual health. They have never thought of the terrible spiritual responsibilities which would devolve upon them.

But as soon as they become mothers responsibilities surge in multitudes upon them. A mother has to win her child's confidence. At the same time she has to check the child mercilessly when it does wrong: she must not *spoil* the child. And to be stern with a child you love needs high courage and a steady vision of a far-off good. Moreover, however frayed her nerves may be, and however unstrung she may be with all the petty cares and worries and crosses of every day life, she must never show sheer irritation. Then she must be sincere and truthful, for children have tenacious memories and extraordinary reasoning power. So the mother must bridle her tongue and her temper. Her every word and act must match the

innocence of her child. She must have unceasing vigilance and unrelaxing control of herself and her child. And yet she must assure her child of her unwavering love. Otherwise it has no confidence in her; and when she expects it to fly it crashes to the ground.

Teaching little souls to fly is a delicate task, and where are we to find the paragons who can do it?

This was Vera Love's problem. But the task was not so hopeless as it seemed; for the very children themselves helped to produce the paragons. The mere fact of bringing a little one into the world in itself brings holiness to the mother. She experiences a joy never before thought possible. She is drawn right out of herself till her whole thought and care is for her little one. She gives her whole self to it. Her own welfare—her own life—is as nothing in comparison with the good of her child. The child itself keeps her up to the best of her powers and makes her feel the continual presence of God.

On this foundation of mother-love the mothers and the Zenith leaders would build up the homes of the future. They would go on from what the Churches were already doing. The Churches—the Roman Catholic Church especially—had always insisted on the value of home and the dignity of the mother. They would insist on it too. And Vera Love and her mothers and nurses must now play a very special and honoured part. From the young women about them they must create mothers who would realise the fearful responsibility of motherhood, the terrible risks they must run, the disaster which follows a slip, the need for unwearying vigilance, and unrelaxing control; but who would also have the vision to see the exceeding great reward which would be theirs, and

the faith to assure them that in working for their children they were working for God, and that what they were working for was therefore bound to be.

All interest now centred in Vera Love. I frequently met Golden Promyss at this time; we had many talks about the future of the Zenith League; and it was upon this new development of the League's activities that his mind was chiefly set. Vera Love with her wonderful spiritual understanding and power had first inspired him to found the League. And upon her, too, he now principally depended to ensure its future. On the success of these efforts to spiritualise the home and rear true children of God would depend the lasting good of the League and its uninterrupted growth, generation after generation. If each generation were taught to reach forward over the succeeding generation to lift it still nearer to God there could be no stagnation—only a steady upward ascent. And as I talked with Promyss I could almost see the future forming the present.

We found that the main principle upon which Vera Love intended to work was to persuade the mothers to be so spiritual themselves that their children would catch their spirituality from them. They were to work more by practical example than by direct teaching. Mothers must, therefore, first spiritualise themselves.

The child being so receptive by nature it would imbibe spirituality as readily as it imbibed milk from its mother's breast, or as it breathed in the air about him. And being also exceedingly responsive, and particularly responsive to spiritual impressions, it would eagerly respond to any spirituality the mother showed. Before all else the mother must, therefore, discipline herself and steep herself in spirituality. She must fill herself with the Holy Spirit of God and

show it forth in everything she did about her child. The Spirit of Love must permeate every activity. This was the main principle to go on.

Every mother must find out for herself how best to apply this principle. But Vera Love recommended the mothers to try what her mother had done to her as a baby and what she had done to her own children. Thus, a mother might have her baby quite by herself for a short time every evening before he was sent to sleep. She might then kneel down by him, and, with her hand resting upon his little body, pray earnestly to God that the very highest happiness should be his, that he should grow up good and true and pure; and that she herself might be a good mother to him and help him to be filled with the goodness of God.

If a mother thus collected herself together every evening and turned towards God and prayed in this low, soft, reverential voice, the particular sound of her voice, and her humble attitude would in some obscure way have its effect upon the child. He *would* feel something going out from her to him. And as this went on evening after evening for months and years an impression of holiness and reverence would be made upon his plastic little soul—and exactly that kind of impression to which that responsive soul was specially inclined to respond.

But, whether or not a mother prayed over her child in this particular way, what was important was that she *should* pray beside him, that he should see her in this *attitude* of prayer, should hear her voice in its most reverential tone, should feel her yearning for his happiness, should, as he grew, see by her acts the supreme importance she attached to the things of the spirit, like being good and loving and true, and loving beautiful things, and should through her feel

the near and constant Presence of this mysterious Power Whom she called God.

Then, all in good time, and quite naturally, the little child would come and kneel by her, too, and offer up his first prayers—prayers most likely of thankfulness for the good things about him. Perhaps at first he would pray through the mother, asking her to speak for him, and she would gently lead him on without forcing him or causing him to make any strain unnatural to him. And he would *feel*—and feeling comes before thought with children—he would feel God as a kind of loving presence which helped him to happiness and expected him to be good.

And when he grew older still and began to think and ask questions about God the mother would be ready with her replies. The taste he would, like all children, have had for spiritual things would have day by day been satisfied. The reality of the Unseen would present no difficulties, for children dwell in the realm of the spirit, and to them their imaginary creations are as real as actual men and women. So when the child asked his naïve questions about God the mother could candidly say that God was far too great for her to know all about Him: she was herself learning more and more about Him every day. But she did know something and she did know what was most important of all about him. He was greater far than any man, but He was *in* everyone of us as well as all about us. He was like the air: we breathe Him in all day, and He keeps us alive: but we cannot see Him. The child could not *see* the love in his mother's heart but he was sure that it was there. He could not see the love in his own heart for his mother but he was sure that it was there. And this love that his mother had for him and that he had for his mother *was* God—

was a tiny bit of God. God was *like* that—only ever, ever so much greater. And just as the mother wanted her child to be happy but knew that it was only through being good that he *could* be really happy so did God want the little child to be happy and, therefore, expected him to be good.

In this way the child would gradually form in his mind the idea of God as a Being like his mother or his father only much greater. Behind all he saw about him was some great Unseen Power from Whom all things had come—himself and his mother and father and brother and sister and everybody and everything else—a great Loving Spirit governing all, the Maker of all, the fount and source of all.

And when the child asked why God could not make him good at once and for always the mother could tell him that then he would find no happiness in being good. All his happiness he got from *struggling* to be good and fighting against naughtiness. A little boy who could never be anything but good would have none of the joy of being good. He would have a very dull life. He would be no happier than a thing like a watch. A kitten would be happier.

These things the mother might say. And the child from constantly watching her, from observing, as children do, every act of hers, and trying to imitate her, would catch her spirituality and try to imitate her. And seeing that she cared more for spiritual things than for anything else in the world he also would treasure them most.

And the mother would encourage the child in forming spiritual *habits*—the habit of prayer, especially. Not the formal repetition of the self-same prayer, night after night, and morning after morning. But the habit of regularly, morning and evening, turning

to God—directing the whole little self in the direction of what is good and loving. So the initial spiritual impulse will have been strengthened into a habit and given a chance of development in a natural, orderly way.

Further the wise mother would encourage him in *doing* spiritual things. Perhaps, if she is musical, she would have played or sung to him; or, if she had the beautiful art of story-telling, she would have told him some of the great, inimitable Bible stories, and the story of the life of Jesus; at least she might have read them to him and shown him pictures. And now she would encourage him to do things for himself. To sing, or to repeat the hymns by heart, to paint pictures, to be kind and considerate and loving with others. It would all help him to exercise his spiritual faculties. And she would praise him when he did well and so encourage him in well-doing.

And she would let him have his own little spiritual treasures—some books of Bible stories, or sacred pictures, or pictures of Jesus and of great saints.

And she would take an *interest* in all his efforts towards spiritual things, and make him see that she was more interested in them than in anything else he did.

So would he grow up with a feeling of reverence and love for God. And in due time he might be taught to regard Jesus as his supreme hero. The story of Jesus might be so told him that he would look upon Jesus as the hero of heroes and not as so utterly apart as to be beyond all hope of imitation. And he might be led to study Jesus in order to know what God was like.

All this a mother might do for a child by himself. But he would never be entirely by himself. There

would be other children to play with. And the mother would encourage him to be sociable, to fit in with other children, to have consideration, and to practice the give and take of life.

His natural love of birds and animals, too, she would foster. Pet animals might be part of the home. But whether they were home animals or tame animals, such as dogs and horses, that he might come across, or whether they were wild animals like rabbits, and birds, such as the sparrows, robins, thrushes, blackbirds, and larks, all about, any notice he took of them or affection he showed for them should be encouraged. It would help to foster in him that kinship with all living things that is natural in children and which helps them the better to understand and love God.

And so also would it be with flowers. Often a child will caress and kiss a flower. And every child loves picking flowers and feeling that they are his own. In this way, too, children come to love God. For in the beauty of the flowers they are seeing God. And when they love the beauty they are loving God.

But most mothers would have more than one child to look after; and even with one child there would probably be the father and dependents. And the mother would have to keep the whole together—to make father, mother, brothers, sisters, nurse and servants into one beautiful whole. The older would have to be kept helping the younger, the younger the older; the stronger giving way to the weaker, and the weaker doing at least what they can. Mutual helpfulness would have everywhere to prevail; and perseverance, affection, emulation, and great pride in the home. All this a mother would have to do and with all her love and tenderness to maintain a firm discipline among the children, making them realise

that it was only by obeying certain laws that they could reach happiness.

And a mother *could* only do this if she were sustained by the belief that she was the responsible agent of God—that she was carrying out the Intention of God, and therefore had the support of God behind her, just as an ambassador feels that he has the confidence of his country and will be supported in whatever he does when carrying out his country's purpose in what he honestly believes is the best way.

But in all this responsible and most delicate work, in which every word and every act must ring true to the hyper-sensitive ears of children, and in which love must never fail—must never be carried away into impatience—she could now be helped by the Zenith League. For the League in its corporate capacity would also regard itself as the responsible agent of God, and do all in its power to help the mother and her children.

In the performance of sacred plays, in its musical performances, in its debates, as well as in the leisure of its library and its social amenities, the Minster would give the mother an opportunity for getting away for a time from the many worries, and harassings of child-management and housekeeping. At the performances she would be lifted out of herself and refreshed. And in meeting with other mothers she would be able to compare experiences and receive comfort.

And for the children themselves the Minster should be a help. Here a mother could bring her child to mix with other children. They would find there innumerable books and pictures to look at. Special plays would be performed for them, and special concerts organised.

Some of the plays would be specially designed, too,

to furnish answers to very delicate questions of sex which parents are shy of dealing with themselves, but which, nevertheless, are of extreme importance to the child. In the art of the drama all that a child should know can be gracefully and tactfully told. And the utter sanctity—the *holiness*—of this great creative urge of life which wells up in all of us straight from God would be deeply impressed upon the children's minds.

More than that the children—and also more elderly boys and girls—would be given every opportunity in creative art for satisfying this creative urge. Sacred plays would be got up in which children themselves could act—and play-acting is one of the things they love most. They would act scenes and incidents from Bible stories, both in the Old Testament and the New. They would sing and play some musical instrument. They might compose little poems or write little stories, or paint pictures. In whatever way they were most naturally disposed to give themselves out they would be encouraged to express themselves, so that the creative urge within them might find its satisfaction in a healthy and legitimate way.

And for the mothers and children the Zenith League would take a pride in giving of their very best—for the mothers because they deserved it, and for the children because they are such tyrants that nothing but the best will ever satisfy them. There would be nothing priggish and improving about the plays. But they would be really good. Everything, whether it were a play or music or singing or dancing, would be first-rate, and if the little audience could now be filled with awe and now break out into peals of childish laughter the promoters of the entertainment would have won their richest reward.

Nor need there be any fear of these children being bored by spiritual entertainment. Spiritual things are far more interesting to children than material. And the Bible is a glorious storehouse of spiritual things fitted for children.

In these several ways the League would help the mothers and help the children. The emblem and the motto of the League would be continually before them. The wings of their soul would develop. They would become ready to take the risks of flying. And soon like the lark they would be soaring away to heaven, and softly as the dew the music of their song would fall upon us from the skies.

But like the lark, too, they would be encouraged not only to soar and to sing. They would have to spend most of their time on the ground doing the every day work of the world. And for that, too, the children would be trained, though such training would be carried on in the schools outside the sphere of the League.

Such were Vera Love's methods of training mothers and children in spiritual things and thereby spiritualising the homes. And so much did the leaders of the Zenith League appreciate what she was doing that they decided upon holding a special Home Day.

The Home Day was meant to inaugurate the coming *Queendom of Home*; and mothers were to be given a *royal* welcome both by men and children.

The ceremony was held with great rejoicing. Crowds of children assembled and sang and clapped. There were flowers everywhere. Vera Love, as the Queen of Mothers, was enthroned in her Queendom. She was escorted to a bower of roses and surrounded by little children carrying flowers. And Golden

Promyss, speaking for the men especially, expressed their gratitude to the mothers. Every man sympathised with them in their trials and vexations and disappointments. And every man admired their heroism, firstly in bearing children, and afterwards in sacrificing themselves for the good of their children. They deserved every bit as much honour as was given to soldiers on the battlefield. And a perfect mother deserved honour not only for her courage and devotion but for her skill. She who could fashion husband, children, dependents into one beautiful home bound tight with love and affection was an artist. Nay more, the maker of a home was the supreme artist; and poets, painters and musicians should humble themselves before her as queen of them all. For the material she had to work on was not words, or sounds, or paint, but living, palpitating human beings; what she had to create was nothing passive like a picture or a poem, but something unceasingly active; and she had to work, not in retired seclusion, but under the incessant strain and vex of life without rest or respite. And she who succeeded was entitled to the praise we give to the greatest.

Home Day eventually became an annual ceremony. Every year a Mother Queen was chosen, and men and children paid homage to her, and renewed their vows of loyalty to the Queendom of Home. And so, at long last, the home and the mother received the attention so much overdue.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE CHRIST COUNTRY

PROMYSS had put the finishing touch on his work at Holm. He had captured the spirit of their Day of Pentecost and safely enshrined it in the Zenith League. And Vera Love, by her work in training mothers to spiritualise the home, had ensured that the spirit would be passed on to future generations. So the Zenith League at Holm could serve as a model which would help other localities and communities to start something of the same kind elsewhere; and Promyss could now feel himself free to turn his attention to what was being done in other parts of the country and gather the whole movement together and see it firmly guided in the right direction.

Flaming Zeele, Glad Ardour, Ernest Interest, Gay Kurridge and others had all performed noble work in spreading news of what had been done at Holm and in stimulating enthusiasm. As a result Zenith Leagues with their Minsters, or at least Sacred Dramatic Societies, were springing up everywhere. The fire that had been lighted at Holm had spread all over the country.

But now the many separate Leagues wanted to come together more closely. There was strong disinclination against forming any powerful central organisation which would dictate to the local Leagues, quench their spirit, and cause their fresh spontaneity to wither away. All wanted the different Leagues to be springing up of their own inner urge, to be preserving their own individuality and making their own

special contribution. At the same time, the young Leagues did feel the necessity of coming together to compare notes and to profit by the common experience. If they could have a meeting where they could exchange ideas and compare results a great stimulus to the Leagues would be given. And in any such conference a decision might be taken as to the direction which should be given to the whole Zenith movement.

A conference accordingly was held in Towne in which delegates from all the young Leagues took part. Hope presided over the meeting, but Golden Promyss was the moving spirit, and in his speech excelled himself. As he thought of all that had been accomplished since he first devoted himself to the work, and as he felt the enthusiasm of the meeting and the expectations which were centred on him a prophetic spirit seemed to seize him. And he never looked fresher. As he grew older physically, spiritually he grew younger.

They were come together from every part of Our-ownland to find a common aim so that they might all be moving in the same direction. He would give them one, he said. It should be to make of Our-ownland a *Christ-country*. And by a *Christ-country* he meant a country bringing fresh gladness to mankind—a *happy country*—a country which would be so happy that it would want to share its happiness with every other country, and every other country would want to know the secret of its happiness.

And it would be happy because it would have attained to *holiness*—to holiness in some degree—and would be ever striving after holiness in a *higher degree*.

And the holiness would be blended love and beauty raised to the *nth*, derived from and shot through and

through with the compounded love and power and wisdom which forms the Holiness of God.

And the Christ-country would have attained to this holiness because it possessed the *choir-spirit*; because every home, and every village, and every town, and the whole country possessed and was possessed by the choir-spirit.

And the choir-spirit would be there when each member of the choir sang of his best for the choir as a whole and for the sheer joy of singing his best, while the choir as a whole saw to it that every single member gave of his best.

That would be the secret of the happiness in the Christ-country which it would want to share with all other countries.

The same choir-spirit that had been created at Holm, and in the other Leagues which had been formed on the model of Holm, Promyss urged they should now create in them all together. And both singly and together they must help to make it prevail in the Church and in the State. In Ourownland as a *whole* the choir-spirit must be made to prevail. Then the happiness they had found at Holm—the happiness which necessarily followed from holiness—would spread all over Ourownland. Ourownland would become a happy country. And what Holm had done for Ourownland, Ourownland would do for the whole world. It would be able to infuse the whole world with the choir-spirit and a passion for holiness, and so bring happiness to every country.

At present all over the country the local Leagues were singing their separate songs like the larks in a field. The separate Leagues must now be got to sing in harmony. All the larks might emulate one another to sing of their best. But a lark choir must be formed.

And it must compose its own lark hymns and anthems of glory and praise; and must choose its own lark conductor to compel the last strain of music out of the choir. First one and then another might sing some exquisite solo but always to the accompaniment of the whole lark choir, and as part of one whole anthem.

So let them keep coming together here from all over Ourownland, continued Promyss. Let the choirs of all the Leagues vie with one another for the honour of singing here before all the others. But also let them choose the best singers from all the local Leagues to form a supreme choir which would produce music of surpassing merit and so tone up the standard of singing all over the country. And let them build here a Minster fit for such concerts—a central home for all the Leagues and the most beautiful building that ever was built, where they could meet together all the year round.

Here they would set up their own chosen director of music. The music in his soul would be the music in the soul of the whole Zenith movement. And as he raised his baton to conduct the orchestra of Leagues all over the country he would bring that music out of every soul.

By putting the whole energy of his soul into producing the utmost music from the whole choir of Leagues and music of the highest pitch of excellence; by making the Leagues sing together, sing in tune and sing in time; by making the various singers reinforce and supplement one another; he would compel from them a result they could never produce without him.

Each singer would be made to sing his part to perfection, the singers of bass and soprano, tenor and

alto, all fitting into one another and reinforcing each other to produce a perfect harmony, now a soprano, now a bass, now a tenor singing a solo, but to the accompaniment of the whole body of singers, none taking a peculiar credit to himself, but all—composer, director, solo singer and accompanying singers—feeling the need of the other, all contributing to the one great result, and all giving thanks to God that they could do so much to His glory.

That, concluded Golden Promyss, was the choir-spirit in which they must now go to work to make a Christ-country of Ourownland.

His appeal met with a ready response. And on the same lines as the League had adopted at Holm, the younger Leagues forthwith proceeded to collect money and gifts and to proffer service for the building of a great central Minster. Every local League undertook to do its share of the work. Endevur was again engaged to design a building. The plans were freely discussed before a meeting of delegates. Improvements suggested by experience were made. The best of craftsmen were employed for the decoration; the best artists for painting the pictures; the best sculptors for the statuary. The work of all was blended in the general scheme of architecture; and the result was a building exactly fitted to the purposes of sacred dramatic and musical art, of philosophical deliberation and social gatherings for which it was designed. And in its outward aspect to the general community it presented itself as a thing of beauty which the citizens loved to see among them in their capital city. It was worthy of its central position.

And, having their central home towards which they could gravitate, all the local Leagues were now stimulated to increasing effort. One company of actors

would be chosen annually to give its own performance at the Capital Minster; and the different localities would emulate one another for the honour. So also would it be with the community singers. And actors and singers, when they came to perform before the critical audience of Towne and of members from numerous other local Leagues, would be spurred on to give of their utmost.

And this was not all. Besides each locality sending up its own company of actors, and company of singers to perform its own sacred play, and sing its own hymns and anthems, the best individual actors, singers, and musicians were picked to make up a select company.

Thus the best actors, singers and musicians were invited to perform in a building of the most perfect architecture and adorned with the most beautiful statuary, pictures and decoration that the country could produce. The service of every art was called in. And it was meant that the finest sacred dramas and the most heavenly sacred music should here be performed.

From Holm and from many other villages and towns throughout the country, there would thus be welling up new inspiration, fresh and fresh. At the Capital Minster they would be gathered together and brought to a focus. Then from the centre there would issue to the localities a new inspiration—the inspiration of interpretation and direction expected from a conductor; the energy and stimulus which would brace up every local League; and that tone and temper which would tune them all into perfect harmony.

Towns and villages would break forth in songs of thanksgiving. Those who still only listened would catch happiness from the singers, grow to envy them

and stir themselves to become singers too; till the whole country would become one beautiful song.

And happiness is infectious. Other countries would catch it from Ouwonland. And Ouwonland could never be fully happy till all other countries shared in her joy. She would, therefore, be yearning to communicate her own happiness to every other country.

And the happiness which springs from holiness is peculiarly contagious. For holiness in its essence is self-propagating. No individual can be holy in an unholy home; and no home can be holy if one member is unholy. And the same with country. Holiness from its intrinsic nature urges every member to make his home and his country holy, and urges the country and the home to make each component member holy. Of necessity this has to be. Holiness cannot remain inactive beside impurity and imperfection. And many another country would itself, like Ouwonland, have been working for it.

So holiness of its own inner propelling power would have spread itself over the world, till all countries had learnt to treasure it above material prosperity, above excellence in art, above excellence in science, above every other excellence. And where their treasure was there would their hearts be also. And what their hearts were steadfastly set on that they would inevitably attain.

Centuries and milleniums might have to roll by ere holiness wholly reigned on the earth—centuries of strife and competition between country and country. Discords innumerable there might be. But always the spirit of holiness would have been exerting its compelling attraction on men and winning their souls. And the spring-time would be perpetually recurring when

the various countries would be wanting, like the lark, to leave their earthly cares and singing soar to heaven.

And by then there would be a common music in their souls. Other countries would have picked up the refrain from Ourownland. From every other country men with music in their souls would have been drawn to Ourownland. And from Ourownland singers would have gone out over all the world. The desire of all countries would now be to sing together in harmony. They would demand that one world-anthem should be composed; and they would choose one world-conductor. He would exact of them the sternest self-discipline, and force them to exert every power to the full. But he would beat the utmost music from them and wring from their souls something worthy of offer to God.

Then, having sung their song, they would, again like the lark, return to earth and go about their daily business and take their part in the bracing battle of life. But now they would work with singing hearts and a new-found joy would give zest to all they did. And always they would bear with them the intent of soaring again when the spring came round, and of once more flooding the heavens with their glorious pæans of praise.

This is the End that my Endsight shows me is shaping the course of Ourownland as the rose shapes the rose-bud. A Christ-country is in process of development. And the spiritual leaders of the people are the responsible agents of God through whom it must be brought into being.

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The coming country

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